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HYMNS AND THEIR SINGERS

Twenty one Plain Sermons

M. H. JAMES LL.D.



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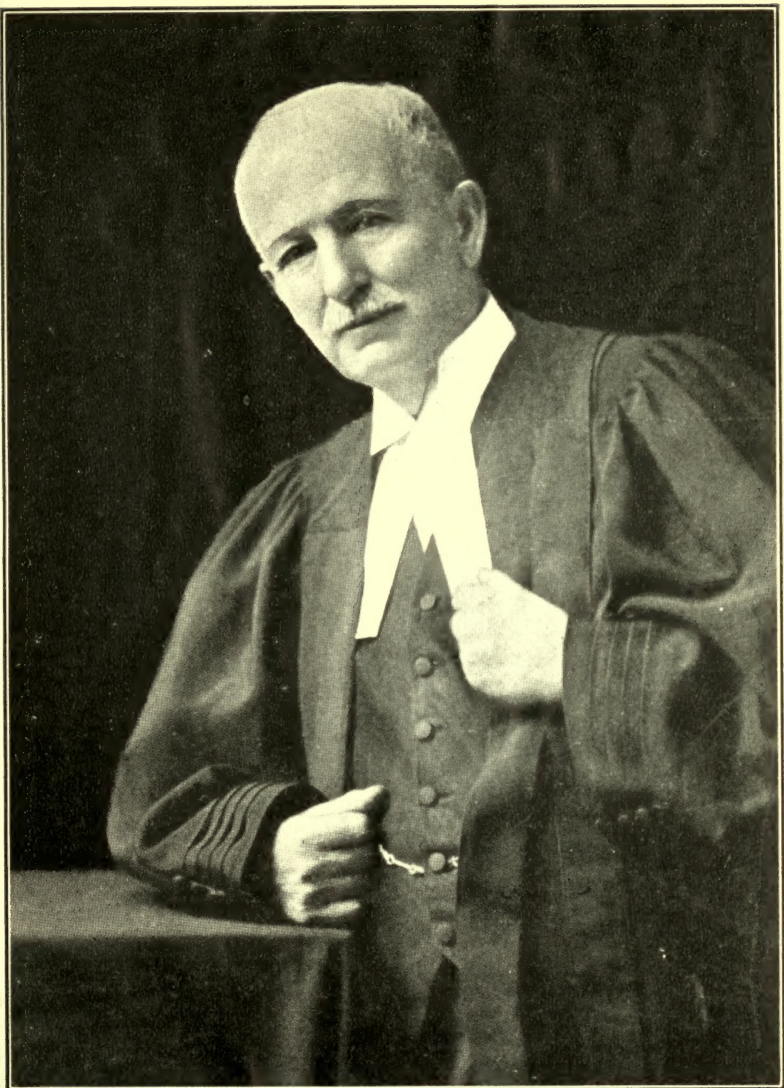
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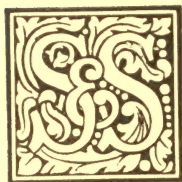
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Hymns and their Singers



Hymns and their Singers

"I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with
the understanding also." I COR. XIV. 15.

BY THE
REV. M. H. JAMES, LL.D.

Vicar of St. Thomas's, Hull

AUTHOR OF
"DEATH, AND WHAT THEN?" "GOD AND HIS WITNESSES."
"THE SABBATH MADE FOR MAN." ETC., ETC.

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Dedication.

TO MY DEAR FRIENDS,
THE MEMBERS OF THE CONGREGATION OF
ST. THOMAS'S, HULL,
IN APPRECIATION OF THEIR MANY KINDNESSES.

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Preface.

THE motto which I have chosen for this little book contains my excuse as well as my reason for having written it. In modern times Hymns have assumed such an important position in our public worship, that some acquaintance with their origin, history and meaning, seems necessary for their intelligent use. Influenced, therefore, by this idea, I was induced to prepare and preach three series of seven sermons each, on the subject of "Hymns and their Singers." The result will be found in this book.

My object was to interest my people in the authorship and history of the hymns they sing, as well as in the meaning of the words they use, and thus to aid them in adopting St. Paul's resolution as their motto :

"I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also."

Preface.

In submitting these Sermons to a wider public, I am not without hope that they may stimulate inquiry as to the *personality* underlying so many of our beautiful hymns.

M. H. JAMES.

*St. Thomas's Vicarage,
Hull.*

Easter Monday, 1907.

Hymns and their Singers.

I.

“For ever with the Lord.”

I THESS. IV. 17.

“And so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

VERY few successful hymn-writers have had more varied experiences than James Montgomery.

The episodes of his early life hardly seem calculated to cultivate the poetic spirit, and yet he rose superior to his prosaic surroundings and succeeded in producing numerous charming lyrics and beautiful hymns.

He was of an essentially poetic instinct even from his childhood.

There is a story told of his very early school-days, which indicates this poetic temperament. He was at school at Fulneck, near Leeds, and one warm summer's day his teacher (who was evidently a wise and humane man) allowed the class of little boys to sit under a hedge while he read them some poetry. The smooth flow of the teacher's voice, as he recited extracts from Blair's *Grave*, had such a soothing

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effect that his audience, with a single exception, was soon fast asleep. James Montgomery remained wide awake. He had, for the first time, heard a language which awakened the echoes in the depths of his being, and from that day forward his energies were devoted to the production of descriptive verse of one kind or another. Much of his poetry is tinged with the pensiveness, amounting almost to melancholy, of his nature. In his "Old Man's Song," he writes :—

"There was a time—that time is past—
When, Youth ! I bloomed like thee ;
A time will come—'tis coming fast,
When thou shalt fade like me :

"Like me through varying seasons range,
And past enjoyments mourn :—
The fairest, sweetest spring shall change
To winter in its turn."

And in his well-known little poem, "Night," we have another instance of the pensive disposition.

"Night is the time for rest :—
How sweet when labours close,
To gather round an aching breast
The curtain of repose,
Stretch the tired limbs, and lay the head
Down on our own delightful bed !

"Night is the time to weep :—
To wet with unseen tears
The graves of memory, where sleep
The joys of other years ;
Hopes, that were angels at their birth,
But died when young like things of earth.

For ever with the Lord. 50

“Night is the time for death:—
When all around is peace,
Calmly to yield the weary breath,
From sin and suffering cease,
Think of heaven’s bliss, and give the sign
To parting friends—such death be mine ! ”

As a poet, Montgomery was not in the front rank, but as a hymnist he has had few superiors. He left behind him some four hundred hymns, and of these, no less than one hundred are still in use. I consider the hymn before us this evening, “For ever with the Lord,” to be the finest specimen which his genius has produced. But it does not stand alone in its beauty and pathos. “Go to dark Gethsemane,” “Songs of praise the angels sang,” and “Hail to the Lord’s Anointed,” are very fine lyrics indeed. He was a man of holy and devout spirit, with a deep knowledge of Holy Scripture, and thus equipped, it was only to be expected that his hymns would outshine and outlive his other poems.

The first specimen of Montgomery’s writings that came under my notice was his beautiful definition of Prayer—that was many years ago, but I do not know that I have met with anything finer since.

“Prayer is the soul’s sincere desire,
Uttered, or unexpressed,
The motion of a hidden fire
That trembles in the breast :

“Prayer is the burden of a sigh,
The falling of a tear ;
The upward glancing of an eye,
When none but God is near.”

§ Hymns and their Singers.

James Montgomery narrowly escaped being an Irishman, and although a Scotsman born, he was really, by education and temperament, a thorough Englishman.

His father was John Montgomery, a Moravian minister, who had just arrived from Ireland to take charge of the Moravian congregation at Irvine, in Scotland, where his little son was born on November 4th, 1771. The family soon returned to Ulster, where the Moravians had established a settlement, and, in 1777, James was sent to school at the Moravian Seminary at Fulneck, some six miles from Leeds. Here it was that his spirit was stirred within him by hearing his master reading some passages from Blair's *Grave*, and he started on a boyish career of versifying that has had few equals.

His first remuneration was received from Earl Fitzwilliam, to whom he presented one of his written poems, receiving as the reward of his labours one guinea.

The authorities at Fulneck did not understand James Montgomery. He was a dreamer of dreams and a seer of visions, and they made an effort to cure him by getting him employment in a baker's shop at Mirfield. But he was not to be cured.

He remained at Mirfield some eighteen months, when he was seized with an irresistible impulse to see his verses in print. He started on his journey to London with 3s. 6d. in his pocket, but finding employment in a village store at Wath, his purpose was abandoned for a time. He did, however, after a

For ever with the Lord. So

time, make his way to London, where he met with such little encouragement that he was glad to return to the store at Wath once more.

We next find him in Sheffield as assistant to Mr. Joseph Gales, the proprietor of the *Sheffield Register*. The times were disturbed politically, and Mr. Gales, getting into difficulties, had to seek safety in flight.

This event made an opening for Montgomery, and he started the *Sheffield Iris* in 1794, and conducted it with much ability and success for thirty-one years.

It is true he had to pay two separate visits to York Castle, where he employed his compulsory leisure in the composition of poems, which were published under the title of "Prison Amusements." His prison experiences seem, however, to have done him good. His character as a man and a Christian stood very high with all who knew him.

After the publication of the "Wanderer in Switzerland," in 1806, he was acknowledged as a true poet, and several of his other writings added to his reputation. He lived to the good old age of eighty-three years, and passed away on April 30th, 1854, at Sheffield, where most of his lifetime had been spent. He had become a man greatly beloved, and "Sheffield honoured herself by bestowing on her famous townsman a public funeral."

Such in life and in death was the author of the hymn for our consideration this evening:—

❧ Hymns and their Singers.

“‘For ever with the Lord!’
Amen, so let it be;
Life from the dead is in that word,
’Tis immortality.
Here in the body pent,
Absent from Him I roam,
Yet nightly pitch my moving tent,
A day’s march nearer home.”

This hymn first appeared in 1835. It is much in use in America, and is a great favourite. The arrangement of the verses varies in the numerous hymn books where it may be found, although it is well known that its author strongly objected to any correction or rearrangement of his compositions.

In “Church Hymns” there are only five of the original verses, and these are so arranged that the second verse forms a kind of refrain to each of the others. In “Hymns Ancient and Modern” there are eight of the four-line verses, so arranged as to make four eight-line verses. But keeping to the arrangement in our own hymnal which is very effective, we can scarcely doubt that the poet had the closing verses of the fourth chapter of the First Epistle to the Thessalonians before his mind when writing this hymn. Indeed, the first line of the hymn is a quotation of the words of our text.

It looks as if the hymnist had been reading the passage beginning, “But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will

For ever with the Lord. 30

God bring with Him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God : and the dead in Christ shall rise first : Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air : and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

Then, pausing, he exclaims, "For ever with the Lord !" And perceiving the glory of the sentiment, he endorses it with the cry of the twofold *Amen Amen*. Just as Nelson, on the morning of Trafalgar, when he had commended his country's cause in prayer to the Almighty, in his eagerness concluded with the threefold *Amen, Amen, Amen*, so the poet eagerly endorses the statement of the apostle, "And so shall we ever be with the Lord."

He perceives that such words mean "immortality," and he pours out his soul in the fervent desire, to see the golden gates of the New Jerusalem swing on their hinges, to let the weary travellers in. It was a glorious aspiration ! But its realisation is not yet. When we come to the conclusion that "Our rest is in heaven, our rest is not here," we are more likely to think seriously of our preparation for the home beyond. When we account our dwelling-place here below as a *tent*, and appraise our home above as a *mansion*, we are not unlikely to have our daydreams

§ Hymns and their Singers.

tinged with the glories of our "House not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

And with such aspirations filling our breasts, we can honestly and joyously look forward with the eye of faith, to that happy day when, our earthly pilgrimage ended, we shall stand at the golden gates of the heavenly city.

"My Father's house on high,
Home of my soul, how near
At times to faith's foreseeing eye,
Thy golden gates appear."

The thought of heaven as our home is a very comforting one. Home is home not so much because of its position or condition, but on account of the sacred ties, and influences, and companionships which there surround us.

"'Mid pleasures and palaces
Though we may roam,
Be it ever so humble,
There's no place like home."

And when we transfer this ideal to the heavenly home, and consider its purity, its peace, its harmony, its love, its service, and its permanence, the idea becomes entrancing, and the earnest prayer of this hymn arises from our hearts :

"'For ever with the Lord!'
Father, if 'tis Thy will,
The promise of that faithful word
E'en here to *me* fulfil."

For ever with the Lord. So

We know from the word of truth that "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him" (1 Cor. ii. 9). Faith is indeed a mighty power, but even the strongest faith will fail to fully realise the glory, the perfection, and the peace of the heavenly home. There faith will be lost in sight, and hope will be rendered useless, for what a man seeth why doth he yet hope for? Oh, think of the untold happiness implied in the first line of this hymn. "For ever with the Lord!" Unspeakably blessed companionship! "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes" (Rev. vii. 16, 17).

"So when my latest breath
Shall rend the veil in twain,
By death I shall escape from death
And life eternal gain.
Here in the body pent,
Absent from Him I roam,
Yet nightly pitch my moving tent,
A day's march nearer home."

II.

**** Glory to Thee my God this night. ****

PSALM XVII. 8.

“ Hide me under the shadow of Thy wings.”

THE author of this well-known hymn was the famous Bishop Thomas Ken. He was born at Beckhampstead, in Hertfordshire, in 1637. He had lost both father and mother before his fifteenth year, when he was admitted as a foundation scholar at Winchester. From Winchester Ken proceeded to New College, Oxford, where he was appointed to a Fellowship in 1657, although he did not take his degree till 1661, the year after the Restoration. It is probable that this was also the year of his ordination, though he remained some time in Oxford as a College tutor and lecturer on logic and mathematics. In 1663 he became rector of Little Easton, in Essex, and some two years later was appointed Chaplain to Bishop Morley, of Winchester. He became quite famous as a preacher, and it is said that he was the original of Dryden's ideal priest :

Glory to Thee my God this Night. &c

“With eloquence innate his tongue was arm’d,
Tho’ harsh the precept,
Yet the preacher charm’d.”

Ken certainly had the courage of his opinions. Even Charles II. had to admit this, for he often said to those about him, “I must go and hear Little Ken tell me of my faults.”

After holding some important incumbencies, and enjoying the experience of a year’s foreign travel, Ken was consecrated Bishop on January 25th, 1685, having been nominated by the King to the See of Bath and Wells.

I do not know any single life-period in the history of our nation that is fraught with so many turbulent events as the life-time of Thomas Ken. During his childhood he would hear of the conclusion of the great Civil War and the execution of the King. He would grow up to manhood surrounded by the stirring events of the Commonwealth. His interest in the Restoration of the Stuart dynasty must have been deep and exciting, however disappointing the result may have proved. He was present at the death-bed of Charles II., and at the Coronation of his brother James.

Monmouth’s Rebellion and the Bloody Assize had for their principal field of operations Ken’s diocese of Bath and Wells. And when in 1685 Louis XIV. revoked the Edict of Nantes, Ken was one of those who came boldly forward to assist and befriend the exiled Huguenots who had taken refuge in England. But he had a part in a

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still more exciting episode as one of the seven Bishops who were tried at Westminster Hall for refusing to order their clergy to read the Declaration of Indulgence. James and his Roman Catholic advisers had adopted this Declaration with the intention of humiliating and destroying the Church of England. But their weapon rebounded and destroyed themselves. The Bishops were arrested and sent to the Tower. While being conveyed thither in one of the King's barges, crowds of people thronged the banks of the river. Some implored Almighty God to protect the Bishops, and others, falling on their knees, eagerly besought their blessing. "Throughout the week during which their imprisonment lasted, multitudes of visitors (including several of the highest nobles) came to express their reverence and gratitude to the Bishops, and exhort them to be firm. To the King's extreme mortification, ten Nonconformist ministers were among those who came to assure the seven Confessors of their sympathy and respect."

The trial took place on June 29th, 1688, in Westminster Hall. That date being St. Peter's Day, both the Gospel and Epistle contained distinct messages of comfort and encouragement to Ken and his friends. The Gospel for the day proclaimed the Lord's promise that the gates of hell should never prevail against His Church, and the portion of Scripture appointed "for the Epistle" was equally appropriate. It recorded the imprisonment of St. Peter by another kingly

Glory to Thee my God this Night. ✠

tyrant, and indicated the demeanour of the Early Church in its time of trial; "but prayer was made without ceasing of the Church unto God for him," and proceeding, instanced the efficacy of those prayers as shown in the release of the apostle. To say the least, the coincidence was remarkable, for the jury, after being locked up all night, came into Court next morning with a verdict of "Not Guilty!" So the Bishops were free. Thus ended what Macaulay describes as "the most memorable State trial recorded in the British annals."

But good Bishop Thomas Ken had more troubles awaiting him. He was a loyal subject of King James, and had sworn allegiance to him, and he was far too conscientious to take the oath of allegiance to another. William of Orange landed at Torbay, and the Revolution was soon completed, but Ken could not be induced to take the oath, and so he became a non-juror.

Being deprived of his diocese of Bath and Wells in 1691, he lived on the bounty of friends during the last twenty years of his life. It is true he could have returned to his diocese after the accession of Anne, but he declined to do so, declaring that he "had quite given over all thoughts of re-entering the world."

He had never been a really strong man, and the trials and anxieties of his life had reduced him to the position of a chronic invalid. So being freed from the cares of his diocese, he spent the time that he spared from his devotions chiefly in writing

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poems and hymns. Ken's poetry is almost forgotten, but his morning and evening hymns still find a home in the hearts of thousands; and I do not think they are likely to die. They have been translated into several languages, but they are said to be at their best when wearing their English dress and associated with the English Prayer Book.

Dr. Alexander, Archbishop of Armagh, gives it as his opinion that "No other hymns are so suitable to the homely pathos and majesty of the English Liturgy; none are so adapted to the character which the English Church has aimed at forming, the sweet reserve, the quiet thoroughness, the penitence which is continuous without being unhopeful. When we listen to them or repeat them with congenial spirit, in whatever clime we may be, the roses of the English dawn, and the gold of the English sunset are in our sky." But

"Be the day weary or be the day long,
At last it ringeth to evensong."

Ken died at Longleat on March 19th, 1711, and in accordance with his desire, his body was borne by twelve poor men to the church of Frome-Selwood, in his former diocese, and laid in a grave under the East window of the chancel, just at sun-rising.

It is recorded that this good Bishop looked forward with the keenest expectations to the morning of the glorious Resurrection Day.

Glory to Thee my God this Night. 50

You have heard of people whose Bibles would always open at their favourite chapters. Well, it is said that Bishop Ken's Greek Testament would open of itself at St. Paul's glorious exposition of the Resurrection in 1 Corinthians xv. The Great Day was ever in his thoughts and often on his lips. And so after all his experience of tumults and revolutions, he passed peacefully away "in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life."

In his will he had declared: "I die in the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Faith, professed by the whole Church before the disunion of East and West; more particularly, I die in the Communion of the Church of England, as it stands distinguished from all Papal and Puritan innovations, and as it adheres to the doctrine of the Cross."

In life and in death such was Bishop Thomas Ken. His three hymns for morning, evening, and midnight are well-known, but we are concerned to-night chiefly with his evening hymn:—

"Glory to Thee, my God, this night,
For all the blessings of the light;
Keep me, oh keep me, King of Kings,
Beneath Thine own Almighty wings."

Here we have thanksgiving for mercies already received, followed by a prayer for protection beneath the sheltering arms of the Almighty. Although the figure is different, this prayer is founded on the statement in the Book of Proverbs: "The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous

of Hymns and their Singers.

runneth into it and is safe." It is the prayer of David in Psalm xvii.: "Hold up my goings in Thy paths, that my footsteps slip not. Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of Thy wings."

It is most ungrateful to lie down at night without thanking God for the many mercies and deliverances from the risks and dangers of the day. But this is no uncommon attitude towards the Giver of all good gifts, men are all too ready to accept the gift and forget the Giver. It was ever so. God's ancient people were in bondage, and He raised up a mighty deliverance for them. When they hungered He fed them, and when they thirsted He gave them drink, and led them safely through the Wilderness and into the Promised Land.

How grateful they must have been! No, far from it. They ignored their Deliverer and made His inheritance an abomination.

Oh, let us never forget as we lie down at night to thank God for all His blessings of the light, and having done this duty we may with a good conscience safely nestle under the shadow of His wings. But having thanked God for the blessings of the day and implored His safe-keeping during the night, we must not ignore our short-comings. Our next prayer is a cry for pardon.

"Forgive me, Lord, for Thy dear Son,
The ill that I this day have done;
That with the world, myself, and Thee,
I, ere I sleep, at peace may be."

Glory to Thee my God this Night. 50

Many a sleepless night is the result of a wakeful conscience. The ill that we have done, still unrepented of and still unforgiven, will often banish sleep from drowsy eyes. What, then, are poor sinners to do? Why of course they are to confess their sin and to ask pardon for the sake of Jesus Christ. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John i. 9). Then, and not till then, may we expect restful repose.

I always think that the fourth and fifth verses of this hymn should occupy the third and fourth places. They certainly seem to follow the prayer of the second verse in natural order.

"O may my soul on Thee repose,
And may sweet sleep mine eyelids close,
Sleep that shall me more vigorous make
To serve my God when I awake.

"When in the night I sleepless lie,
My soul with heavenly thoughts supply ;
Let no ill dreams disturb my rest,
No powers of darkness me molest."

This verse recalls Ken's midnight hymn, as well as the ejaculations and special psalms for the night, which he inserted in his "Manual for Winchester Scholars." The same idea is prominent in the good Bishop's description of the religious life of Lady Margaret Murray. He had taught her proper prayers to use should she happen to awake at night. Thus we see that midnight devotions

§ Hymns and their Singers.

occupied an important position in Ken's religious system.

Following this verse and preceding the Doxology, is, in my opinion, the proper place for that solemn twofold prayer which usually stands as the third verse :

“Teach me to live, that I may dread
The grave as little as my bed ;
Teach me to die, that so I may
Rise glorious at the awful day.”

Holy living is the usual precursor to holy dying. There may be exceptions, but this surely must be the rule.

“The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day (Prov. iv. 18).

Balaam was wishful enough to die the death of the righteous, but he does not seem to have realised that to live the life of the righteous was the only sure and certain path that led to the death of the righteous.

Let us not be so inconsistent. Let us rather pray the prayer and follow the example of good Bishop Ken, and thus may we join in the Doxology with fervour of soul.

“Praise God, from Whom all blessings flow,
Praise Him, all creatures here below,
Praise Him above, angelic host,
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.”

III.

“ O Jesu. Thou art Standing.”

REVELATION III, 20.

“ Behold, I stand at the door, and knock.”

IN studying the subject of “Hymns and their Singers,” one cannot help but notice the large number of hymns which fail to catch the popular fancy. If you take up an ordinary hymnal, you will find the names of over a hundred hymnists, with only one hymn attached to each. And yet with the exception of Alfred, Lord Tennyson, I do not suppose that there ever was a hymn-writer whose output was limited to one hymn. The inference therefore is clear, that of the dozens, or scores, or hundreds of hymns produced, one only has become a popular favourite. It would seem then, that the composition of a popular hymn is a most difficult achievement, and that the names of those who have succeeded in the effort ought to be kept in respectful remembrance.

It is curious also to note the varying estimation in which the compilers of different hymnals hold

❧ Hymns and their Singers.

the hymns of the same authors. I have examined copies of the new editions of two well-known hymn books. In one I find seventeen of Bishop How's hymns, and in the other only eight. But even the large number of seventeen hymns indicate a waning popularity, for in the previous edition of the same hymnal Bishop How was credited with no less than forty-four hymns. The period between the issue of the two editions has proved sufficient to test their popularity, and to warrant the compilers to reject more than a score of them.

And yet I venture to predict that the late Bishop of Wakefield will never be reduced to one hymn. His fine hymn for Saints' Days :

“For all the Saints who from their labours rest,”

is not likely ever to be forgotten. His Passion-tide hymn has also become a favourite :

“Lord Jesus, when we stand afar,
And gaze upon Thy holy Cross,
In love of Thee and scorn of self,
Oh may we count the world as loss!”

Another of his hymns which is often sung at Christmas-time is also sure to retain its place. It is more suitable for Holy Week than for the Christmas season, but it is a beautiful and solemn lyric, and may be introduced into the public worship of the Church on almost any day in the year. Like so many other successful hymns, it

O Jesu, Thou art Standing. 30

is constructed on the plan of question and answer. The first four lines in each verse constitute a question to which the second four lines are a reply :

“ Who is this so weak and helpless,
Child of lowly Hebrew maid,
Rudely in a stable sheltered,
Coldly in a manger laid ?
'Tis the Lord of all creation,
Who this wondrous path hath trod ;
He is God from everlasting,
And to everlasting God.”

And then there is the pathetic hymn for our special consideration this evening :

“ O Jesu, Thou art standing
Outside the fast-closed door.”

This hymn can never, I fear, go out of fashion. There will never come a time, I greatly fear, when the doors of all hearts will stand so widely open that the Saviour can enter without knocking. So the reputation of the writer is secure for all the ages. His name will go down to posterity, engraven on the lines of this sadly beautiful and scriptural hymn.

This hymn was written in 1867, and has already made its way into a large number of hymn books. In a concrete form the leading idea in the hymn is reproduced in the celebrated picture by Holman Hunt, of our Lord standing knocking at a door.

of Hymns and their Singers.

William Walsham How was born in 1823, at Shrewsbury. His father was a practising solicitor of that town, and young How was educated at Shrewsbury School, from which he entered Wadham College, Oxford, in 1840. He did not very greatly distinguish himself during his University career, but he graduated with honours in 1845, and was ordained in the following year.

After gaining experience in two curacies, he became rector of Whittington, in Shropshire, where he remained for twenty-eight years. Few men have declined more offers of bishoprics than Walsham How. In 1867 he declined the Bishopric of Natal, and in 1868 that of New Zealand, and again in 1869 he refused the Bishopric of Montreal. The refusal of three bishoprics in three successive years would seem to be unique. Then followed in 1873 the offer of the Bishopric of Cape Town, and after an interval of five years, he declined, in 1878, the Bishopric of Jamaica. The year following he accepted the offer of Suffragan to the Bishop of London, with the title of Bishop of Bedford, and undertook the episcopal supervision of East London. The Archbishop of Canterbury conferred upon him the D.D. degree, and some years later his own University gave him a similar distinction. He was soon recognised as a great leader in spiritual matters in East London, where he started that valuable organization known as the "East London Church Fund."

He was one of the first of our dignitaries who

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was named "The Omnibus Bishop," and he himself was quite proud of another title accorded to him about the same time, "The Children's Bishop."

In 1888 he accepted the Bishopric of Wakefield, and he soon became almost as popular in Yorkshire as he had been in London. His death occurred in 1897, and he was buried in his old parish of Whittington, which he had loved so well.

Many of Bishop How's prose writings are well-known and very popular. His "Commentary on the Four Gospels" has had an extensive circulation, and his "Manual for the Holy Communion" a wider still. But his fame as a writer of hymns will, in my opinion, outlast the remembrance of any or all of his prose works.

Some fifty-four of Bishop How's hymns are in use in various hymnals, but that for our subject this evening stands admittedly at the top.

Have you ever noticed that there is one characteristic in which the religion of Jesus Christ differs from all other religions? This characteristic is well worth remembering. Christianity represents God as seeking man. The dominant idea in all other religions is that of man seeking God. But even in the most ancient book of the Old Testament the impossibility of man finding God by his own effort, is clearly taught. Zophar puts this question to Job in words that can only receive a negative reply. "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" (Job xi. 7).

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The history of the culture and philosophy of all the ancient nations replies to this question with a decided negative. It depicts the failure of mankind to find out God by feeling after Him. But no sooner had this fact been demonstrated than God's method of rescuing man was revealed. He sent His Son to seek and to save that which was lost. This is the great distinctive feature of our holy religion. The Almighty One seeking the wanderer and trying to induce the prodigal to return to his home. This is the precise doctrine of our text and of the stirring hymn which Bishop Walsham How has founded upon it.

“O Jesu, Thou art standing
Outside the fast-closed door,
In lowly patience waiting
To pass the threshold o'er.
Shame on us, Christian brothers,
His Name and sign who bear,
Oh, shame, thrice shame, upon us
To keep Him standing there!”

Here it will be noticed that the “attempt at reconciliation begins with the Saviour.” “It is not that the sinner goes out to meet Him, or to seek for Him; it is that the Saviour *presents Himself* at the door of the heart as if He were desirous to enjoy the friendship of man.” Let us observe then the attitude of our Blessed Lord towards the sinner as it is depicted in this hymn. It is surely calculated to soften the hardest heart. He *stands* at the door. This indicates a persevering, patient effort. But it is at

O Jesu. Thou art Standing. 50

the same time an attitude of warning to the careless, unrepentant sinner. What if the Saviour, grieved that His repeated knockings meet with no response, should cease His efforts and turn away! We are meant to infer from the very nature of the case that the knocking cannot go on for ever. You may knock at a man's door many times, but you do not continue knocking throughout the livelong day. Let the sinner beware lest the knocking cease, and he be left to his undisturbed repose.

In this hymn we have the Saviour's efforts to gain access to the sinner's heart represented as the strands of a threefold cord. In the first verse He is described as *standing* at the door; in the second verse He is represented as *knocking* at the door; in the third verse He is depicted as *pleading* at the door. Think of it! The Son of God Himself condescends to stand at the door of the sinner's heart, and finding the door shut in His face, He tries to gain admission by knocking, and this failing He lifts up His voice in the accents of pleading and remonstrance at such ungrateful treatment. Ah, you think this must exist merely in the imagination of the poet. Such condescension entirely surpasses the most sanguine expectation of the human heart.

This is not to be denied. But then we must remember that this marvellous act of condescension does not stand alone. This was not the first humiliation that the Son of God endured for the sinner's sake. You remember St. Paul's exhortation to the Christians of Philippi: "Let this mind be in you,

❧ Hymns and their Singers.

which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross" (Phil. ii. 5-8).

That was a humiliation indeed! After Calvary, no condescension is too great to be believed.

"O Jesu, Thou art knocking;
And lo! that Hand is scarred,
And thorns Thy Brow encircle,
And tears Thy Face have marred.
Oh, love that passeth knowledge
So patiently to wait!
Oh, sin that hath no equal
So fast to bar the gate!"

It is quite evident from our text on which this hymn is founded, that the Saviour recognises a man's right to open the door or keep it shut. This is a tremendous responsibility, but it is strictly in accordance with the Scriptures of truth and the nature of man. The Saviour respects the freedom of choice, which is one of the noblest qualities of a man's nature. He stands and knocks and pleads, but He makes no attempt to force the door. That must be a voluntary act on the sinner's part. He must open the door. Oh, it is a tremendous responsibility. It is possible for a man to hear the knocking, and instead of opening the door, to bolt and bar it in the

O Jesu. Thou art Standing. &c

face of Divine compassion. It is possible for a man to hear the gentle pleading of his Divine Redeemer and yet "to keep Him standing there." Our freedom in this matter is a high prerogative of our nature, but while we use it we should not abuse it.

The sinner need never be condemned because of his sin, if he would only repent of it, and open the door of his heart and let the Saviour in. He is condemned because he scornfully refuses to open the door in answer to the pleadings of the Son of God most High.

What then is our resolve to-night? Let me put your resolution into words: God helping us we shall open the door. That is our determination. And then? What then? Why, the text tells us. Tells us what? Tells us that "He will come in." Who will come in? An archangel from the highest heaven? No. One greater still. A seraph from before the throne of God? No. One greater still. Listen! "I will come in and will sup with him and he with Me." Jesus will come in. The glorious Son of God will enter our poor sinful hearts, if we will only open the door to Him.

Well may we take shame and blame to ourselves for keeping Him standing and knocking and waiting there.

"O Jesu, Thou art pleading
In accents meek and low—
I died for you, My children,
And will ye treat Me so?"

❧ Hymns and their Singers.

Surely the hardest heart amongst us must be softened by such gentle entreaty. Our answer to such pleading may well be given in the closing words of this touching hymn :

“O Lord, with shame and sorrow
We open now the door:
Dear Saviour, enter, enter,
And leave us nevermore.”

IV.

“There is a Green Hill far away.”

ROMANS V. 8.

“While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

MANY of the hymns in our hymnals were written by women. Frances Ridley Havergal wrote several beautiful hymns, amongst them that well-known offertory hymn :

“Thy life was given for me !
Thy Blood, O Lord, was shed
That I might ransomed be,
And quickened from the dead.
Thy life was given for me :—
What have I given for Thee ? ”

Charlotte Elliott was the authoress of some of our most popular hymns amongst them :

“Just as I am, without one plea
But that Thy Blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidd’st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come ! ”

§ Hymns and their Singers.

Frances Elizabeth Cox wrote the touching Easter hymn that is so often sung at that joyous season :

“ Jesus lives ! Thy terrors now
Can no longer, Death, appal us ;
Jesus lives ! by this we know
Thou, O Grave, canst not enthrall us,
Alleluia ! ”

But few of our lady hymnists have been so successful or have achieved such a world-wide reputation as has the writer of the verses for our consideration this evening.

“ There is a green hill far away,” is usually found amongst hymns for children. It is, however, suitable for persons of any age and may be used at any season, but it is particularly calculated to assist our devotions during Holy Week, and especially so on the most solemn day in that week—Good Friday.

Mrs. Alexander has attained a unique reputation as a children’s hymnist, but many of her other hymns have become popular.

“ The roseate hues of early dawn ” is one of hers, and so is :

“ Jesus calls us ; o’er the tumult
Of our life’s wild restless sea
Day by day His sweet voice soundeth,
Saying, ‘ Christian, follow Me.’ ”

“ Once in royal David’s city,” is another of her hymns which stands in point of popularity only second to “ There is a green hill far away.”

Mrs. Alexander was a very gifted woman. Her

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poem, "The Burial of Moses," indicates the possession of powers of the highest order.

"By Nebo's lonely mountain,
On this side Jordan's wave,
In a vale in the land of Moab
There lies a lonely grave.
And no man knows that sepulchre,
And no man saw it e'er,
For the angels of God upturned the sod
And left the dead man there.

"And had he not high honour,
The hill-side for a pall,
To lie in state, while angels wait
With stars for tapers tall,
And the dark rock-pines, like tossing plumes,
Over his bier to wave,
And God's own hand in that lonely land
To lay him in the grave.

"O lonely grave in Moab's land!
O dark Beth-peor's hill!
Speak to these curious hearts of ours,
And teach them to be still.
God hath His mysteries of grace,
Ways that we cannot tell,
He hides them deep, like the hidden sleep
Of him He loved so well."

It is said that Tennyson was a great admirer of this poem, and that he more than once declared that he would have been proud to have been its author.

"There is a green hill far away," was written in 1847, by Miss Cecil Frances Humphreys, some three years before the writer was married to the

as Hymns and their Singers.

Rev. William Alexander, then the rector of the parish of Termonamongan, in the county Tyrone. In 1867, Dr. Alexander became Bishop of Derry, and he is at present the dearly loved Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of Ireland. Their wedded life lasted for forty-five years, half of which was spent in the historic city of Derry in a position of great influence and much responsibility. In October, 1895, this gifted singer was called to her home, in that land where the angels and archangels and all the company of heaven form a glorious choir around the throne of God. Her body rests in the City Cemetery, and her grave is visited by wanderers from many lands, who have learned to know and love her, through her charming hymns.

It is recorded by one such visitor that he made a little pilgrimage to the quiet and beautiful God's Acre, late in the afternoon of a perfect autumn day. The woods of Preben were in sight, and the waters of the Foyle were rolling near. Soon the sun begins to sink, the daylight dies, and borne upon the evening breeze, a whisper comes which seems to say :—

“ The roseate hues of early dawn,
The brightness of the day,
The crimson of the sunset sky,
How fast they fade away !
Oh ! for the pearly gates of heaven,
Oh ! for the golden floor,
Oh ! for the Sun of Righteousness,
That setteth nevermore ! ”

There is a Green Hill far away. So

"There is a green hill," stands at the beginning of Mrs. Alexander's collected poems. It is related that this gem amongst her hymns was written as she sat beside the bed of a sick child. The little one was at length restored to health, and it is said that she always felt that she had an ownership in this delightful hymn. Several of the greatest composers of modern times have written tunes for this hymn, and one of them (Gounod) has pronounced it the most perfect hymn in the English language, and gives as the reason for this decision, its charming simplicity.

It is indeed beautifully simple, and yet within the compass of its five short verses you have the whole gospel of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. It has been translated into many languages, and it so happened that on the Sunday after Mrs. Alexander's funeral, a missionary from the Dark Continent, preaching in Derry Cathedral, declared that he had heard it sung by half-clad Africans, and in a language its author had never known.

Before we proceed to examine this hymn verse by verse, I am wishful to recall to your memories a scene of pathetic interest. In the Church of Ireland Hymnal there is a hymn known as "St. Patrick's Breastplate." This hymn is a faithful metrical version of the prayer associated with the name of Ireland's patron saint, and it was written by Mrs. Alexander at the suggestion of a well-known Irish clergyman, Dean Dickinson, now deceased. Allow me to quote two verses :

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"I bind unto myself to-day
The power of God to hold and lead,
His eye to watch, His might to stay,
His ear to hearken to my need,
The wisdom of my God to teach,
His hand to guide, His shield to ward ;
The Word of God to give me speech,
His heavenly host to be my guard.

"Christ be with me, Christ within me,
Christ behind me, Christ before me,
Christ beside me, Christ to win me,
Christ to comfort and restore me,
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,
Christ in hearts of all that love me,
Christ in mouth of friend and stranger."

Well, it so happened that a famous Irishman, Archbishop Magee, was enthroned in York Minster, on St. Patrick's Day, 1891. It also happened that Dr. Alexander, the husband of the authoress of "St. Patrick's Breastplate," was invited to preach on the occasion. Then it was arranged that this hymn should be sung as most appropriate under such circumstances. So it happened on the same day that an Irishman was installed as Primate of England, and an Irish Bishop preached the sermon, and that Bishop's wife, an Irish woman, translated the hymn which was sung, in commemoration of the Festival of an Irish national saint. For that day, at least, the Irish had captured the City of York.

But to return to the hymn with which we are more immediately concerned this evening :—

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“There is a green hill far away,
Outside a city wall,
Where the dear Lord was crucified,
Who died to save us all.”

When this hymn was first written, the second line began with the word, “Without.” “There is a green hill far away, without a city wall.” The alteration was made by the writer herself, and she tells us why she made it. She was once asked by a little child what was meant by a green hill not having a city wall.

This induced her to substitute the word “Outside” for the word “Without.”

On that “green hill,” all our hopes are centred. Outside that city wall the great transaction was performed which enabled a just God to become the Justifier of the ungodly.

“We may not know, we cannot tell,
What pains He had to bear,
But we believe it was for us,
He hung and suffered there.”

Think of it! “Not this man, but Barabbas.” “He came unto His own but His own received Him not.” Oh, the shame of it. Think of His sufferings: He climbs the hillside carrying the cross of shame, and all for us! For you and for me.

He bears the cruel piercings of the torturing nails, and all for us! For you and for me. He endures the mockings of the crowd and the railings of the malefactor, and all for us. For you and for me.

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None can calculate the vastness of His self-sacrificing love. It is at best only a superficial estimate that humanity can form of the sufferings endured by the Godman on that "green hill far away." But one thing we do know. We know why it was that He endured such shame, and pain, and loss. We know why it was that "He bowed His head and gave up the ghost outside that city wall."

Mrs. Alexander puts it so simply and yet so scripturally, that her statement of the *cause* cannot be better expressed :—

" He died that we might be forgiven,
He died to make us good,
That we might go at last to heaven,
Saved by His precious Blood."

" He Who was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, emptied Himself that He might become a man ! " " For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life." But how was it that God did not send some angel of higher or of lower place, to redeem our lost and ruined race ? How was it that no archangel was heard to exclaim, " Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God ! " Volumes have been written in answer to such questions as these, but I am bound to tell you that no more satisfactory reply has ever been forthcoming to such questionings than that

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contained in the fourth verse of Mrs. Alexander's hymn :

“ There was no other good enough
To pay the price of sin,
He only could unlock the gate
Of heaven, and let us in.”

No created being, however exalted, could have paid our debt, so that God might be just and yet the Justifier of the ungodly. So it was necessary that the Son of God, Himself, should take our nature upon Him and suffer the penalty due to sin in our stead.

This is the teaching of St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans : “ There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and of death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and as an offering for sin, condemned sin in the flesh ; that the requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit ” (Romans viii. 1-4).

When we consider such tremendous facts, we may well ask ourselves the solemn question—“ How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation ? ” How, indeed ?

Oh, let us determine, God helping us, that we shall neither neglect nor reject such a great salvation. If such untold condescension and love do not win our

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gratitude and love in return, then we must be hardened indeed.

I do hope that we may each and all adopt the conclusion of this hymn as our own to-night :

“ Oh, dearly, dearly, has He loved,
And we must love Him too,
And trust in His redeeming Blood,
And try His works to do.” *Amen.*

V.

“Art thou weary, art thou languid?”

ST. MATTHEW XI. 28.

“Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

MANY of our best-known hymns are translations from the Latin, or Greek, or German.

Dr. John Mason Neale made the work of translation his own—several of his numerous hymns being reproductions from Latin or Greek authors. In the new edition of “Hymns Ancient and Modern,” there are sixty-four hymns by Dr. Neale, but of these fifty-four are translations. In our own hymn book, “Church Hymns,” there are thirty-five of his hymns, and twelve of them are original compositions, eleven are translations from Greek sources, and twelve have their originals in Latin.

The well-known evening hymn is a translation from the Greek:

“The day is past and over :
All thanks, O Lord, to Thee !
We pray Thee now that sinless
The hours of dark may be.
O Jesu ! keep us in Thy sight,
And guard us through the coming night.”

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As a specimen of one of Dr. Neale's translations from the Latin, I may mention,

“Brief life is here our portion ;
Brief sorrow, short-lived care ;
The life that knows no ending,
The tearless life is there.”

This hymn is one of several from Dr. Neale's translations of the Rhythm of Bernard of Morlaix. “Jerusalem the golden” is another, and “For thee, oh dear, dear country,” is from the same source.

The charming, restful hymn which comes before us this evening is a translation from the Greek, and belongs to the eighth century. The hymn first appeared in its modern dress in Dr. J. M. Neale's “Hymns of the Eastern Church.”

There can be no doubt that as Dr. Neale was one of the very first seriously to undertake the enrichment of our hymnology by the method of translation, he still remains a prince amongst translators of hymns. It was a work in which he was *facile princeps*. The rapidity with which he could turn a Latin hymn into English, or an English hymn into Latin, was almost amazing.

The Rev. John Keble was once interested in the production of a new hymnal, so he sought the advice and assistance of Dr. Neale. Neale, whose learning and experience were always at the service of his friends, visited Keble at Hursley Parsonage.

One day he was left alone for a short time during

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the absence of his host. When Keble returned, he found his friend looking puzzled and serious.

"Why, Keble," he exclaimed, "I thought you told me that the 'Christian Year' was entirely original?"

"Yes," was the reply, "it certainly is."

"Then how do you account for this?" queried Dr. Neale, handing Mr. Keble what looked like the original Latin of one of his hymns. He was utterly astonished, and solemnly declared that he had never seen this hymn in the *original* before in his life. Dr. Neale soon relieved his friend's perplexity, by explaining that he had turned the hymn into Latin during his absence.

Dr. Neale, though so successful as a translator of hymns, was not very successful in his original work. His best-known original hymn is perhaps,

"The foe behind, the deep before."

I do not remember having ever seen a similar hymn. In form it is almost unique. But there are some charming sentiments amongst its very irregular verses.

"No longer must the mourners weep,
Nor call departed Christians dead;
For death is hallowed into sleep,
And every grave becomes a bed.

"It is not exile, rest on high:
It is not sadness, peace from strife:
To fall asleep is not to die:
To dwell with Christ is better life."

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No writer has ever held more liberal views on the question of copyright than did Dr. John Mason Neale. He declared again and again that, having published a hymn, the author or translator should cease to claim a vested interest in it.

In his preface to "Hymns on the Joys and Glories of Paradise," we find this statement: "I am very glad to have this opportunity of saying how strongly I feel that a hymn ought, the moment it is published, to become the common property of Christendom, the author retaining no private right in it whatever." He only expected in return for the use of his hymns, that a copy of the hymnal in which they were inserted should be sent to him.

John Mason Neale was the son of a Cambridge Senior Wrangler. He was born in London on January 24th, 1818. His father died soon after he had completed his fifth year, and the boy's training was then left entirely under the direction of his mother. He received his earlier education at Sherborne Grammar School, and from one or two clergymen who took private pupils. In 1836 he gained a scholarship at Trinity College, Cambridge, where he was considered the finest classical scholar of his year. But, although such an excellent classical scholar, he had a distaste for mathematical studies, and under the rules then in force at Cambridge, he was obliged to be satisfied with an ordinary degree.

He afterwards became a Fellow of Downing College, and as graduate he won the Seatonian

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Prize for Sacred Poems no fewer than eleven times.

Neale was ordained in 1841, but he was in such a delicate state of health that he had to decline undertaking the arduous duties of a parochial charge. In 1846 he became warden of Sackville College, East Grinstead, where he remained for the remainder of his short life.

He was a most active and extensive writer on a great variety of subjects. As a linguist he has had few equals. He had more than a bowing acquaintance with over twenty languages, and was perfectly at home with, at least, a dozen of them.

He contributed most able articles to newspapers and periodicals, and his prose was as pure and lucid as his poetry. But his most unique gift was that of a translator of hymns, in which useful office he has had no equal. Dr. Neale died on August 6th, 1866, having, though short his life, impressed his footsteps deeply on the sands of time.

It will be noticed that the method of question and answer was adopted in the construction of this hymn. In this respect it may be compared with Dr. Bickersteth's hymn, "Peace, perfect peace," but we find the query in Neale's hymn put more definitely.

" Art thou weary, art thou languid,
Art thou sore distrest?
' Come to Me,' saith One, ' and coming,
Be at rest.' "

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It is not every professing Christian who can reply with confidence to this verse in the words of Horatius Bonar :

“ I came to Jesus as I was,
Weary, and worn, and sad ;
I found in Him a resting-place,
And He has made me glad.”

Happy, beyond expression, is the man or woman who can relate such an experience ! But there will be many a true, though diffident, disciple who, while following afar off, feels constrained to exclaim :

“ Hath He marks to lead me to Him,
If He be my Guide ? ”

Marks ? Oh, yes. Undoubted and unmistakable are the signs of conflict on the Sacred Body of our Guide.

“ In His feet and hands are wound-prints,
And His side.”

In the Book of Revelation a strange and unlooked-for spectacle is presented to the Seer. “ And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb standing, as though it had been slaughtered ” (Revelation v. 6). On this passage Professor Milligan explains :—“ The words ‘ as though ’ do not mean that the slaughtering had been only in appearance. It had been real. The

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Saviour, pierced with cruel wounds, 'bowed His head' on Calvary, and 'gave up His Spirit.' 'The first and the last and the Living One became dead,' and had been laid in the tomb in the garden. But He had risen from the tomb on the first morning, and 'behold He is alive for evermore.' He had ascended to the right hand of the Majesty on high; and there He stands living and acting in all the plenitude of endless and incorruptible life." So the marks are there still. None who wish to follow the Lamb need seek His guidance in vain.

"Is there crown of royal splendour
That His brow adorns?
'Yea, a crown in very surety,
But of thorns!'

"If I find Him, if I follow,
What my portion here?
'Many a sorrow, many a labour,
Many a tear.'"

To many people this will seem but a poor inducement to follow a Guide. Even some who have set out on the road to the celestial City, not expecting to encounter any difficulties, may, like Pliable in the "Pilgrim's Progress," be constrained to abandon the journey in the face of a "Sorrow's crown of sorrows." It will be remembered that as Christian and Pliable went on talking, the latter desired a description of the enjoyments expected in the land whither they were going. Christian

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told him of the "endless kingdom" and the "everlasting life" which was in store for them. "Well said," replied Pliable, "and what else?" Christian then mentioned the "crowns of glory" and the "garments that would shine like the sun." Then Pliable was greatly pleased and exclaimed, "This is very pleasant; and what else?" "There shall be no more sorrow nor crying," answered Christian. Then was Pliable much exhilarated, and shouted "Come on, let us mend our pace." But at the very first obstacle that presented itself his enthusiasm vanished. He expected to secure the prize without running the race.

I greatly fear that in this respect he was only a type of many professing Christians. No sooner did he get into the mire of the Slough of Despond than he shouted to his companion, "May I get out again with my life you shall possess the brave country alone for me." Such conduct is very despicable, whether in the worldling or in the Christian.

But you ask:

"If I still hold closely to Him,
What hath He at last?
'Sorrow vanquished, labour ended,
Jordan past!'"

"If I ask Him to receive me,
Will He say me nay?
'Not till earth, and not till Heaven
Pass away.'"

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"So that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous; verily He is a God that judgeth in the earth" (Psalm lviii. 11). This is how the Psalmist puts it. And the Saviour's precious invitation is written in the same key: "Come unto Me, all ye that labour, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light."

Such is the testimony of all who have seriously tried to walk in the narrow way. So let it be our firm resolve, by God's grace, to persevere.

"Finding, following, keeping, struggling,
Is He sure to bless?
'Angels, martyrs, prophets, virgins,
Answer, Yes.'"

VI.

**** Fight the good fight with all thy might. ****

II TIMOTHY IV. 7, 8.

“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith : Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day : and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing.”

THE Chaplain of a well-known Asylum for the insane once informed me that he frequently met with instances of patients having favourite hymns. His practice was, whenever he failed to gain the attention of the inmates in one of the wards, to stand in the centre of the room and inform them that he was about to repeat a hymn, asking which they would like him to say.

Immediately he would get attention. Then someone would call out the name of a favourite hymn ; but no sooner would he have finished reciting or reading it, than another patient would have a favourite ready, and so he might go on for an hour, receiving the keenest attention.

Fight the good fight with all thy might. 90

It has, however, been noticed that the most popular hymns amongst the Asylum patients, as elsewhere, are Toplady's "Rock of Ages," Charles Wesley's "Jesu, Lover of my Soul," and Charlotte Elliott's "Just as I am."

Hymns sometimes become endeared to us because of some special associations with those we love. It is no very uncommon experience for a clergyman to be asked to arrange for the singing of special hymns at a funeral service, especially when it is held in the church. "Thank you so much for having that hymn, my dear father loved it," or "It was my dear mother's favourite," or "My dear child used often to sing it. It was a great comfort to hear it again." Some such expressions as these are far from being unusual. There are very few Christian people but have their favourite hymns, and it is a propensity that ought to be encouraged. I have often found that when a dying person can remember little else, he or she will repeat a familiar hymn with much accuracy and religious fervour. Again and again have I heard Charlotte Elliott's scriptural hymn recited in this way from beginning to end.

"Just as I am, without one plea
But that Thy Blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come !

"Just as I am, Thou wilt receive,
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve
Because Thy promise I believe,
O Lamb of God, I come !"

❧ Hymns and their Singers.

And in one instance, at least, I have known the stirring hymn on which I am privileged to preach this evening, to have given much consolation to a young man on his death-bed. He had been a scholar in our Sunday school, and had also been a member of the choir for several years, when phthisis declared itself rather suddenly, and the dear young fellow soon found himself face to face with death. Under such trying circumstances he used most earnestly to repeat time after time, Monsell's well-known hymn :

“Fight the good fight with all thy might,
Christ is thy strength, and Christ thy right ;
Lay hold on life, and it shall be
Thy joy and crown eternally.”

Dr. Monsell, the writer of this hymn, was by birth an Irishman, although he spent most of his lifetime in this country. He was born in Londonderry in the year 1811. In 1834 he became a clergyman of the English Church, and subsequently was vicar of Egham, in Surrey, and afterwards of Guildford in the same county.

His death was due to an accident, and occurred in 1875. His church at Guildford was being extensively restored, and he, as vicar, naturally took great interest in the work. One day he was standing in the aisle when a large mass of stonework fell from the roof and struck him on the head. He was found on the floor of the church in an unconscious condition, and being carried to his home, passed away

Fight the good fight with all thy might. So

from the scene of his earthly labours at the comparatively early age of sixty-four years.

Dr. Monsell was the author of numerous hymns and poems, most of which are already forgotten. But his name will ever be kept in remembrance by some half-dozen of his hymns. At the head of the list stands "Fight the good fight." The beautiful offertory hymn in five parts, beginning, "Holy offerings, rich and rare," is also from Dr. Monsell's pen. And so is the noble hymn "God is Love."

" God is love ; that anthem olden
Sing the glorious orbs of light,
In their language glad and golden
Telling to us day and night
Their glad story
God is love, and God is might."

There does not seem anything in the hymn "Fight the good fight," except the mere sound of the words, to suggest its use in time of war. But strange to say its popularity was immensely increased in this country during the war with the Boers in South Africa. One London church where it had been seldom sung previously, is said to have chanted it once a Sunday for three months. I have also heard that during the little war between the United States and the Philippines, this hymn was heartily sung by congregations of all denominations in the great American republic.

It is, however, from beginning to end essentially a spiritual hymn. The weapons enlisted in its warfare

~ Hymns and their Singers.

are not carnal, though they are mighty, through God, in pulling down the strongholds of sin. It is founded on the experience of St. Paul as it is set forth in his second Epistle to Timothy, when he declares, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith : henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge shall give me at that day, and not only to me, but also to all them that have loved His appearing" (2 Timothy iv. 7, 8).

In such excellent terms did the apostle of the Gentiles speak of his life and look forward to his departure. He did not usually assume such an exalted tone. Even St. Chrysostom was somewhat perplexed by the unusual strain in which the apostle writes. And yet one object which St. Paul had in view is quite clear. He wished to encourage his son in the faith, and to stimulate him to continued exertion after his own departure.

"Fight the good fight with all thy might,
Christ is thy strength, and Christ thy right,
Lay hold on life, and it shall be
Thy joy and crown eternally."

I must soon leave you, but you must not relax your efforts on that account. My day of battle is drawing to its close, but so much more is there necessity for you to vigorously wield the sword of the Spirit. My race is nearly run, but you, my son, must take up the running and earnestly contend for the crown. Think how men strive for

Fight the good fight with all thy might. So

the poor wreath of olive, bay, or laurel, which so soon withers and decays. The crown for which we contend is a fadeless one, and will shine for ever and ever. The Umpire who awards it is our Lord Jesus Christ, and the spectators are the angels of God. So run that you may obtain.

“Run the straight race through God’s good grace,
Lift up thine eyes and seek His face;
Life with its way before us lies,
Christ is the path, and Christ the prize.”

Remember this, God’s soldiers are always armed with God’s weapons. Such soldiers so armed are invulnerable.

The warfare in which the Christian is engaged is God’s, and so are the weapons of his warfare. This was clearly St. Paul’s idea when he exclaimed, “Put on the whole armour of God.” And again in the same chapter he exhorts the Ephesian Christians:—“Wherefore take up the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the Gospel of peace; withal taking up the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God” (Ephesians vi. 13-17).

❧ Hymns and their Singers.

Such is the armour which God supplies to every soldier who will enlist in His army:—the girdle, the breastplate, the sandals, the shield, the helmet, the sword. Again, I beg you to remember that it is God's armour.

As in the olden days, Gideon's battle-cry was "The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon"; so it is still. The sword is the Lord's, but He consigns it into our hands to fight our battles and His under His Generalship. The Christian soldier is fighting his King's battle as well as his own. Think of it. A young man enlists in the King's army. In due time a sword is put into his hands. It is not a sword of his own manufacture, nor is it a sword supplied by himself. It is the King's sword. This fact makes the soldier wield it all the more vigorously. He is fighting the King's enemies as well as his own, and the King has furnished him with his weapon. He feels himself in honour bound to fight a good fight.

Now look at this matter in its spiritual sense. As soldiers of Christ Jesus, Christians are armed with "the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." They are not left to fight their battles alone, for the battle is not theirs only, but the Lord's as well. In this fact there is great encouragement. It is the ancient watchword again repeated: "The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon." The Lord's sword and mine. The Lord's battle and mine. In such a contest, the weakest need not fear.

Fight the good fight with all thy might. 10

“Cast care aside, lean on thy Guide;
His boundless mercy will provide:
Lean, and the trusting soul shall prove,
Christ is its life, and Christ its love.”

Yes, “the trusting soul” is a necessary equipment for the soldier of Christ. If we are determined to succeed in our Christian career, an unwavering confidence in God’s assistance is a pre-requisite. No success worth having can be achieved in any other manner. The Christian must work as if all depended on his own exertions, and he must trust as if all depended on Almighty God. “They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint” (Isaiah xl. 31). The good soldier of Jesus Christ must watch and wait as well as fight. And should he feel himself sore pressed in the conflict, he must stick closer and closer to his Guide. As the hymn so well puts it:

“Cast care aside, lean on thy Guide.”

There is little use in a guide if you decline to follow his guidance. Suppose a man joins the crowd of tourists and visits Switzerland. Suppose when there he has a great desire to climb up one of the lofty mountains into the regions of perpetual snow. Suppose he engages a guide who knows every step of the dangerous path by which he gains access to the summit of the mountain. What would you think of such a tourist if you heard that he had

§ Hymns and their Singers.

declined to lean on his guide in the moment of danger? You would be amazed at his folly. And yet this is often the treatment meted out to our Heavenly Guide. Multitudes refuse such guidance altogether, and many of those who profess to follow where He leads, decline to lean on Him in the hour of danger. For all such, the closing words of Dr. Monsell's hymn contain most useful advice:—

“ Faint not, nor fear, His arms are near,
He changeth not, and thou art dear;
Only believe, and thou shalt see
That Christ is all in all to thee.” *Amen.*

VII.

"Sunset and Evening Star."

ISAIAH XLIII. 2.

"When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee."

I DO not know anything more strange in connection with "Hymns and their Singers" than the fact that the writer of "In Memoriam" has left us only one hymn. Judging him by his other writings, you would think that he abounded in such qualifications as would make him a prince amongst hymnists. He begins that most magnificent monument in verse that the pen has ever erected, with some stanzas that only need recasting to make a glorious hymn.

"Strong Son of God, immortal Love,
Whom we that have not seen Thy face.
By faith, and faith alone, embrace,
Believing where we cannot prove.

"Thou wilt not leave us in the dust,
Thou madest man, he knows not why,
He thinks he was not made to die;
And Thou hast made him: Thou art just.

❧ Hymns and their Singers.

“Our little systems have their day ;
They have their day and cease to be :
They are but broken lights of Thee,
And Thou, O Lord, art more than they.”

And looking through Lord Tennyson's poems, we notice many that seem to suggest the form and substance of most brilliant hymns. Such, for instance, are his lines on “The Death of the Old Year” :—

“Full knee-deep lies the winter snow,
And the winter winds are wearily sighing :
Toll ye the church bell sad and slow,
And tread softly and speak low,
For the old year lies a-dying.
Old year, you must not die ;
You came to us so readily,
You lived with us so steadily,
Old year, you shall not die.”

It would surely seem that the author of such verses could hardly have lived a long life in a Christian country without having written many beautiful hymns. But he did not do so. Only one hymn, if it be a hymn, can claim Lord Tennyson as its author. “Crossing the Bar” is a very beautiful little poem, and it is beginning to find its way into some of the new editions of our hymnals. There can be no doubt that its author thought highly of it, for he expressed a desire, during his last illness, that “Crossing the Bar” should appear at the end of all future editions

Sunset and Evening Star. 50

of his poems. It will, doubtless, in time, take its place as a funeral hymn, and it is very suitable for such a solemn occasion. But there is nothing to prevent its being sung during the ordinary Church Services, and, in all likelihood, it will become popular as a closing hymn. There is a philosophical tone about it, as there is in most of Tennyson's writings. Its philosophy is, however, tinged with the hope of immortality as it is revealed in the sacred Scriptures.

But ere I dwell more particularly upon the immense importance of this doctrine, I am anxious to put before you, in merest outline, a sketch of the poet's career.

Alfred Tennyson was, like so many other great Englishmen, the son of a clergyman. His father was rector of Somersby, in Lincolnshire, and Alfred was born at the Manor House, then used as the Rectory, on August 6th, 1809. He was one of a large family of eleven children, seven boys and four girls. When he was two days old he was taken into Somersby Church and was there baptized in the old freestone font, which had served many generations. He began writing verses before he was ten years old. He had been studying Thomson's "Seasons," and when he commenced versifying on the subject of the flowers in the garden, he modelled his verses on the style of the "Seasons."

His brother Charles, who was a year older than Alfred, also wrote verses. In 1827 a volume

❧ Hymns and their Singers.

containing the poems of the two brothers, entitled "Poems by Two Brothers," was published. One year later young Tennyson was entered at Trinity College, Cambridge. He did not reside within the precincts of the College, but occupied private rooms in the locality. In 1829 he competed for the Chancellor's Medal for English verse, and succeeded in obtaining it, much, it would appear, to his own surprise. Wordsworth visited Cambridge during Tennyson's stay there, but whether the two famous poets, the one young and the other old, ever met, does not certainly appear. I think it most likely that they did meet, for Wordsworth, in a letter written during his visit, observed: "We have a respectable show of blossom in poetry—two brothers of the name of Tennyson, one in particular not a little promising." In such terms did the coming Laureate write of his successor. The poet's father died in 1831, and this event so altered his plans that he did not return to Cambridge. Upon his entrance at Trinity he had met Arthur Hallam, and they became very devoted friends. Hallam remained at the University till he took his degree, but requiring rest and change, he travelled in Germany and Austria in 1833, dying suddenly in Vienna, and plunging the Tennyson family into inexpressible grief, he having become engaged to Emilia, the poet's second sister.

There are no more touching words in Tennyson's writings than those in which he describes the death of his friend, Arthur Hallam:

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“ In Vienna’s fatal walls,
God’s finger touched him, and he slept.”

Arthur Hallam died in 1833, and the splendid poem, “In Memoriam,” was not published till 1850, so it is evident that Tennyson gave long years of time and labour to the erection of this surpassingly magnificent monument of song. In the same year that “In Memoriam” was published, he married Miss Selwood, a niece of Sir John Franklin, and settled for a little time at Twickenham. It was while living here that he composed his matchless “Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington.”

“ All is over and done :
Render thanks to the Giver,
England for thy son,
Let the bell be toll’d.
Render thanks to the Giver.
And render him to the mould,
Under the cross of gold,
That shines over city and river,
There he shall rest for ever
Among the wise and the bold.
Speak no more of his renown,
Lay your earthly fancies down,
And in the vast Cathedral leave him,
God accept him, Christ receive him.”

The poet’s next home was at Freshwater, in the Isle of Wight. Here he took up his abode in 1853, and he would fain have had no other home than Farringdon, until his death, but the crowds of sight-seeing excursionists compelled him to seek another residence during the summer months. So he built

❧ Hymns and their Singers.

Aldworth, in Sussex, and used to live there during the holiday seasons.

More than once the poet Laureate declined the honour of a baronetcy. In 1883, however, he was persuaded to accept a peerage under the title of Baron Tennyson of Aldworth and Freshwater. He was seventy-five years of age, but some of his finest work was produced subsequent to this date. Advancing years seem to have caused no abatement in his poetic genius, for he continued to execute most creditable work almost to the end. "Beckett," and the second "Locksley Hall," "The Foresters," and the "Death of Ænone," are specimens of his powers at the age of four score years.

His spirit passed peacefully away in the early morning of October 6th, 1892, soon after his entry upon his eighty-fourth year.

He was buried in Westminster Abbey, hard by the resting-place of Dryden and Browning, amidst the sympathy and homage of the noblest and worthiest of his native land.

On the day previous to his death, he asked for a volume of Shakespeare, and turning to "Cymbeline," he seemed to read some few lines. It is surmised that the passage which attracted his attention was the beautiful dirge :—

"Fear no more the heat of the sun,
Nor the furious winter's rages ;
Thou thy worldly task hast done,
Home art gone, and ta'en thy wages ;
Golden lads and girls all must,
As chimney-sweepers come to dust."

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Short as is the hymn, "Crossing the Bar," there are contained in it two splendid ideas. One of them has been treated at greater length by Wordsworth, and the other by Pope.

Wordsworth, in his well-known ode to Immortality, tells us that

"Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting,
The soul that rises with us, our life's star
Hath had elsewhere its setting;
And cometh from afar;
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God Who is our home."

And although Lord Tennyson is not quite so definite as to the locality from whence we come, he still looks forward to the hour when he expects to retrace his steps to his original home. The poet's own way of putting it is very expressive :

"When that which drew from out the boundless deep,
Turns again home."

It should be helpful to us all to know that this gifted singer cherished the hope, that when he had crossed the Bar, he would find himself in the home from which he had come.

It is almost certain that the poet had the words of our text before his mind when he dictated the first verse of his only hymn :

"When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee."

❧ Hymns and their Singers.

“Sunset and evening star,
And one clear call for me!
And may there be no moaning of the bar,
When I put out to sea,
But such a tide as moving seems asleep,
Too full for sound and foam,
When that which drew from out the boundless deep,
Turns again home.”

Lord Tennyson's wish respecting the peacefulness of his departure was almost literally fulfilled. One who knew all the circumstances of his death has written: “He fell shortly afterwards into a slumber, and a little after half-past one o'clock on Thursday morning, October 6th, the full moon shining on his bed, and his family watching round it in that heavenly light—his spirit passed peacefully away.”

This was surely a picturesque departure.

“Twilight and evening bell,
And after that the dark!
And may there be no sadness of farewell,
When I embark;
For, tho' from out the bourne of time and place
The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face,
When I have crost the bar.”

May we each and all have a most vivid impression of that glorious hope, when our turn comes for “Crossing the Bar.” “For we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him: for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John iii. 2).

To all who are anchored to the Lord Jesus Christ, as their sure and steadfast hope, death will be merely

Sunset and Evening Star. 30

as Pope describes it, a languishing into life. You remember the beautiful and expressive language in which he represents "The Dying Christian" addressing his soul :—

" Vital spark of heavenly flame,
Quit, oh, quit, this mortal frame,
Trembling, hoping, lingering, flying,
Oh, the pain, the bliss of dying !
Cease, fond Nature, cease thy strife,
And let me languish into life."

The question is—the all-important question is—
Have we this great Hope as an anchor of the soul?
Can we honestly repeat, as our own, the closing lines
of Lord Tennyson's hymn ?

" For, tho' from out the bourne of time and place
The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face,
When I have crost the bar." *Amen.*

VIII.

**** Lead. Kindly Light.****

PSALM XLIII. 3.

“O send out Thy light and Thy truth, that they may lead me :
and bring me unto Thy holy hill, and to Thy dwelling.”

MANY intelligent people feel somewhat doubtful as to the propriety of singing this hymn in an English Church. They have a notion—founded entirely on a misapprehension—that Newman wrote this hymn when he was on the verge of departure from the Church of his Baptism. But this is quite a mistake.

“Lead, kindly Light” is a thoroughly Protestant and Scriptural hymn, and it was not until twelve years after its composition that its author joined the Roman Catholic Church.

The history of the production of this hymn is well known. Towards the end of 1832, John Henry Newman, accompanied by his friend Hurrell Froude, started on a voyage to the Mediterranean. In April, 1833, the friends separated at Rome, Newman journeying south into Sicily, where he fell

Lead. Kindly Light. &c

seriously ill, and had to spend some three months in comparative solitude. Having somewhat recovered, he took passage on board an orange boat bound for Marseilles, and finding himself becalmed in the Straits of Bonifacio, one dark and foggy night, he wrote this beautiful hymn.

The sentiments of the hymn and the circumstances of the writer are in complete accord with each other. He was just in the position to plead for kindly guidance. Alone, and not yet quite recovered from a dangerous illness—feeble in body, though brilliant in intellect and unsettled as to his future career—his whole soul goes forth in one grand cry for guidance. Light, more light !

“ Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,
 Lead Thou me on ;
The night is dark, and I am far from home ;
 Lead Thou me on.
Keep Thou my feet ; I do not ask to see
The distant scene ; one step enough for me.”

Beautiful as are the setting and sentiments of this hymn, it did not all at once become popular. It was published in the *British Magazine*, but it was quite unknown till it was taken in hand by the Rev. J. B. Dykes, and fitted with a magnificent tune, which almost at once secured for both hymn and tune a marvellous popularity. It is recorded that in after years, when Dr. Dykes visited Newman at the Brompton Oratory, that the Cardinal acknowledged his obligation in the statement, “ Dr. Dykes, it was you who made ‘ Lead, kindly Light ’ popular.”

❧ Hymns and their Singers.

It is true that the tune in "Church Hymns," writted by Sir Arthur Sullivan, has many admirers, but it still remains the fact that Dr. Dykes' tune retains its popularity. The music and the words are so suited to each other, that they have become completely wedded, and are not likely soon to be put asunder.

John Henry Newman began his strange eventful history in London, on the 21st February, 1801. His father was a member of a banking firm, but the bank failed, and young Newman was under the necessity of proceeding to Oxford to procure his degree as expeditiously as possible. Thus he was precluded from preparing himself for honours, but his work for the ordinary degree was so excellent that a third class in honours was conferred upon him. This was in 1820, and a few months before the completion of his twentieth year. In 1823 he was elected to a fellowship in Oriel College, and soon began to form friendships with Hawkins, Keble, Whately, Pusey, Froude, Ward, and Williams, a band of most clever and most versatile geniuses, who were connected with Oxford at this period.

In 1828 Newman became vicar of St. Mary's, and soon began to make his mark as a preacher, more for the matter than for the manner of his sermons. There is extant a speech by Mr. Gladstone, in which that great man describes Newman's manner as a preacher.

"When I was an undergraduate at Oxford," says Mr. Gladstone, "Dr. Newman was looked

upon rather with prejudice as what is termed a Low Churchman, but was very much respected for his character and his known ability. Without ostentation or effort, but by simple excellence, he was constantly drawing undergraduates more and more around him. Now Dr. Newman's manner in the pulpit was one about which, if you considered it in separate parts, you would arrive at very unsatisfactory conclusions. There was not very much change in the inflexion of the voice; action there was none. His sermons were read, and his eyes were always bent on his book; and all that, you will say, is against efficiency in preaching. Yes, but you must take the man as a whole, and there was a stamp and a seal upon him; there was a solemn sweetness and music in the tone; there was a completeness in the figure, taken together with the tone and with the manner, which made his delivery such as I have described it, and though exclusively from written sermons, singularly attractive."

Such was Newman as a preacher at St. Mary's, where he remained from 1828 to 1843. His parochial sermons were much more successful than what may be called his university sermons. It is admitted that this was so, but there is much diversity of opinion as to why it was so. He seems to have been more at home with sermons on "Subjects of the Day" than he was in his attempts to discover the true relation of "Reason to Faith," and this may account for his more marked success as a parochial than as a university preacher.

❧ Hymns and their Singers.

Newman's connection with "Tracts for the Times" is well known. Tract No. 90, the most famous of them all, was written by him. In this brochure he attempted to reconcile the irreconcilable, and his effort proved a complete failure. His object was so to explain the Articles of Religion as to bring them into conformity with the tenets of Rome, and thus enable those who were bound by the Articles, to teach the very doctrines which they were meant to condemn.

The publication of this Tract raised a storm of disapprobation in the country. Both the Church and the University most strongly condemned its teaching, and when it was found that the author was a Church of England clergyman, his position was indignantly denounced.

Newman seems to have been quite unprepared for such a violent outburst, but, strong man as he was, he was not strong enough to retreat. He found himself condemned on all hands, and not seeing any means of rehabilitating himself, he determined, after a considerable period of hesitation, to join the Church of Rome.

He died at Edgbaston Oratory on August 11th, 1890, after a long and very exciting career. Although a prolific writer of prose and verse, it is doubtful whether he has ever penned anything that will live so long as the hymn which we have selected for our subject to-night, "Lead, kindly Light."

I have already reminded you of the circumstances

Lead. Kindly Light. 50

under which this hymn was written. Manifestly it embodies a prayer suitable for seasons of loneliness and times of emergency. Few of us are so entirely free from embarrassments and anxieties as to make the burden of this hymn inappropriate in our case. But even should we deem it unsuitable to our circumstances to-day, it will, doubtless, not be so to-morrow. Indeed, we are so constantly in need of guidance and leading, that the occasions when we cannot appropriately use this hymn must be few and far between. And we are in need of more than guidance. It is of the utmost importance that we may be led into the right path, but it is no less necessary that our feet should be kept when we get there. One step at a time is a safe rule on our road to heaven. Wise men take short views of life. They "do not ask to see the distant scene." One of the greatest blessings which the Almighty conferred upon our race is our inability to decipher "the distant scene." "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." But it often takes a man a long time to make this discovery. The confession implied in the second verse of this hymn indicates a common experience in the lives of most of us.

"I was not ever thus, nor prayed that Thou
Shouldst lead me on;
I loved to choose and see my path; but now
Lead Thou me on.
I loved the garish day, and, spite of fears,
Pride ruled my will: remember not past years."

❧ Hymns and their Singers.

This verse is said to have been particularly appropriate to the early life of the writer of this hymn. He seems to have had a very tender conscience respecting the escapades of his boyhood. Looking back he could remember a reckless independence of character which caused him much regret and some pain, and wrung from him a cry for pardon. His love for "the garish day" had given place to sentiments and desires of an entirely different order, but he was also fain to be assured that the garishness of his youthful follies was blotted out of the Book of God's Remembrance. His prayer was a repetition of the old cry for pardon! "Remember not the sins and offences of my youth, but according to Thy mercy, think Thou upon me, O Lord, for Thy goodness!"

There must be very few people in any congregation who cannot appreciate the closing words of this verse as their own, "Remember not past years." Forgive and forget is the burden of this verse, and there can be but few more suitable aspirations with which an erring mortal can approach the Almighty.

But this hymn goes on to inculcate the lesson of confidence:

"So long Thy power hath blest me, sure it still
Will lead me on,
O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till
The night is gone;
And with the morn those angel faces smile
Which I have loved long since, and lost awhile."

Lead. Kindly Light. 90

There is here, however, a distinct anticipation that the road will be beset with difficulties. The moor, and the fen, and the crag, and the torrent, clearly indicate that the way may be laborious, requiring help and guidance "till the night is gone." Such an idea is completely in accordance with the teaching of the Scriptures and the experience of the Christian. It has been wisely arranged that "We must through much tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God." Our heavenward journey was meant to be an arduous one, and our prayer should constantly be, "O send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead me: and bring me to Thy holy hill, and to Thy dwelling."

There has been a good deal of discussion as to what the writer of this hymn really meant by the last two lines:—

"And with the morn those angel faces smile
Which I have loved long since, and lost awhile."

Most people who join in the hymn will, I imagine, understand the "angel faces" to be the faces of their departed friends, who are now, as they hope, in the Paradise of God, and "are equal to the angels." We have lost them for a while, but we love them still, and hope to meet them on that shore where parting is a word unknown.

Some years ago the idea occurred to the Rev. E. H. Bickersteth (who was then Vicar of Christ Church, Hampstead, and afterwards Bishop of Exeter) that this beautiful hymn ended rather

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abruptly. Dr. Bickersteth was himself a hymn-writer of no mean order, and he added a fourth verse to this hymn, which, to my mind, was quite worthy of the composition in every respect. The hymn, with the additional verse, found its way into some few hymn books, but the original author courteously objected, and Dr. Bickersteth at once withdrew the verse. This was, of course, the right and proper thing to do, but the additional lines certainly gave a *finish* to the hymn.

“ Meantime along the narrow rugged path,
Thyself hast trod,
Lead, Saviour, lead me home in childlike faith,
Home to my God,
To rest for ever after earthly strife,
In the calm light of everlasting life.”

IX.

"Sun of my Soul! Thou Saviour dear."

ST. LUKE XXIV. 29.

"Abide with us : for it is toward evening, and the day is now far spent."

THIS hymn was written on November 25th, 1820, by the Rev. John Keble. It stands the second hymn in that well-known book, "The Christian Year," under the heading, "Evening."

"The Christian Year" was first published in 1827, and it contains the most brilliant specimens which Keble's genius produced during the previous seven years. So great was the modesty of its author that he could not be persuaded to publish the book under his own name, and yet of all his numerous publications "The Christian Year" is the work by which he is now best remembered.

If in taking your walks abroad you accost a dozen intelligent citizens of Hull, and ask each individual, "Do you know anything about John Keble?" seven of them will probably answer, "Oh, yes. It was he who wrote 'The Christian Year.'" Three of the

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other five will tell you that they have never heard of him ; and the remaining two will most likely ask, "Isn't he the man who has invented the cure for rheumatism?"

It is clear, then, that so far as Keble is popularly known at all, his fame rests upon "The Christian Year." For the one who remembers that he took a leading part in the Oxford movement and was one of the writers of "Tracts for the Times," seven people will remember that he was the author of "The Christian Year."

Lord Rosebery has recently been speculating as to what the people of the thirtieth century will think of the great men of the present day, and for what they will be best remembered, if remembered at all. Well, it is hard to say. But I should not wonder if one great statesman of the twentieth century will be remembered in the thirtieth century as the man who preferred to plough his lonely furrow, instead of becoming the leader of a great party in the State. More unlikely things have come to pass.

John Keble was born in 1792, at Fairford, in Gloucestershire. His father was vicar of the parish of Coln St. Aldwyn's, adjoining Fairford, and had in his day been a Scholar and Fellow of Corpus Christi College, Oxford. John was entirely educated at home by his father, and arrived in Oxford under the age of fifteen years, "a fresh, glad, bright, joyous boy," as his friend Pusey described him many years afterwards. He took an open scholarship at Corpus Christi College, and entered upon residence early in

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1807. In 1810, when he was only just over eighteen, he obtained the very rare distinction of a double first-class in Classics and Mathematics. In less than a year from this double event, Keble was elected to an open Fellowship at Oriel College, and the year following the Fellowship, he carried off the prizes for both the Chancellor's Essays in English and Latin. Indeed, Keble's was the most successful academical career of his time. In one of his letters, John Henry Newman bears ungrudging testimony to the great ability of Keble. He writes, "I shall only mention Keble. At eighteen, he took two first classes. Soon after he gained the two Essays in one year and a Fellowship at Oriel. He is the first man in Oxford."

And yet this was the man to whom it seemed that "the salvation of one soul was worth more than the framing of the Magna Charta of a thousand worlds."

When about to be ordained he constantly implored his friends to pray for him that he might be worthy of his sacred office, and he wrote to his dear friend Coleridge:—"Pray for me too; pray earnestly, my dear, my best friend, that He would give me His grace, that I may not be altogether unworthy of the sacred office on which I am, rashly I fear, even now entering; but that some souls hereafter may have cause to bless me."

He was ordained on Trinity Sunday, 1815, and commenced at once to assist his father in his parish work. In 1825, he became curate-in-charge of Hursley, near Winchester, but upon the death of his mother he returned to Fairford that he might be a

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comfort and assistance to his aged father. Here he acted as curate till his father's death in 1835, when he soon after returned to Hursley as its vicar, which position he held till his death in 1866. He died at Bournemouth on March 29th, and was buried at Hursley on April 6th. His wife only survived him for a few weeks. She had been his true and trusted helpmeet for thirty years, and in their death they were not long divided.

In 1831, Keble's connection with Oxford was strengthened by his being elected Professor of Poetry. He held the office for nine years and delivered a series of lectures and criticisms on classical literature which Dean Church has pronounced "the most original and memorable course ever delivered from the Chair of Poetry in Oxford."

Such was the man who wrote the beautiful evening hymn that I am privileged to bring before you to-night :

"Sun of my soul, thou Saviour dear,
It is not night if Thou be near;
Oh! may no earth-born cloud arise
To hide Thee from Thy servant's eyes."

In our hymn books, Keble's evening hymn usually contains six verses. But when we turn to the original as printed in "The Christian Year," we find no fewer than fourteen verses. So the compilers of our hymn books were compelled by the circumstances to make a selection from the poem, and in this instance the selection has proved most satisfactory.

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Several of the verses omitted are undoubtedly beautiful, but they do not surpass, nor even equal in charm, any one of the six verses which constitute the hymn as found in our hymnals.

Keble placed at the beginning of this hymn the passage from St. Luke's Gospel which I have read as our text :

“Abide with us : for it is toward evening, and the day is now far spent.” You will remember the scene. It was the evening of the Resurrection Day, and some astonishing rumours were being whispered abroad respecting an empty tomb and a risen Saviour. On the road leading from Jerusalem to Emmaus, two men are moving along, and as they walk they are deeply engaged in sad and solemn converse. A stranger draws near and accosts them. Their earnestness of conversation and sadness of demeanour interest Him. He ventures to inquire the cause. Their sadness gives place to astonishment. None but the veriest stranger would ask such a question. “What,” they exclaim, “do you not know the things that have happened in Jerusalem?” The stranger quietly asks, “What things?” Then the travellers rehearse with great vividness “the things concerning Jesus of Nazareth.” His mighty deeds and no less mighty words. Then they tell of His condemnation and of His crucifixion, and of their own waning hopes. And this is the third day. Then their hope revives a little, and they tell of the empty tomb, and the vision of angels who said that He was alive.

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At this point the stranger speaks.

"O ye foolish men!" He exclaims, "is not this in exact accord with what your own prophets have foretold? How slow ye are to believe! Have you not read that your Messiah was to suffer? Do you not know that He was to be wounded, and bruised, and scourged? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." His words were a balm to their sorrowing, hopeless hearts. How He has cheered their drooping spirits. But He is about to depart. Oh, surely no. They will not hear of it. There is deep feeling in their kindly invitation: "Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is now far spent."

Such was one of the pictures which Keble had before his mind when writing his Evening Hymn. But he also contemplated another scene. He pictures a traveller weary and footsore, though as yet some distance from his home. It draws toward evening. The sun is sinking in the west and soon the traveller finds himself in darkness, for

"Yon mantling cloud has hid from sight,
The last faint pulse of quivering light."

Then it is that another journey and another darkness arises before the poet's vision. He thinks of a Sun Whose beams can illuminate the deepest darkness of the soul, but just as the vaporous cloud had hidden the illumining rays of the setting

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sun, so there is the fear that an "earth-born cloud" may obscure our vision of the Sun of Righteousness. Hence the need for the earnest prayer,

"Sun of my soul, Thou Saviour dear,
It is not night if Thou be near :
Oh ! may no earth-born cloud arise
To hide Thee from Thy servant's eyes."

But whether travelling or resting, waking or sleeping, he knows of no happiness apart from Jesus.

Whether it be early morning or dewy eve, or darksome night, he considers that there is only one really safe place, and that place is under the shadow of the Almighty wings.

"Safe in the arms of Jesus,
Safe on His gentle breast !"

And with this desire suffusing his whole being he gives wings to his prayer in two most charming verses :—

"When the soft dews of kindly sleep
My wearied eyelids gently steep,
Be my last thought, how sweet to rest
For ever on my Saviour's breast.

"Abide with me from morn till eve,
For without Thee I cannot live;
Abide with me when night is nigh,
For without Thee I dare not die."

But now having prayed for himself he remembers

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the wants of others. He supplicates for blessings on

“The rulers of this Christian land
'Twixt Thee and us ordain'd to stand.”

And next he recalls the special difficulties and temptations which beset those who minister in holy things, and so he pleads:

“Teach Thou Thy priests their daily cross
To bear as Thine, nor count it loss!”

He is reminded of the words of encouragement and exhortation written to the Hebrew Christians:—
“For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews iv. 15 and 16).

These words of exhortation fire his holy zeal and lend wings to his charity. He prays for those who will not pray for themselves:

“If some poor wandering child of Thine
Have spurned, to-day, the voice Divine,
Now, Lord, the gracious work begin;
Let him no more lie down in sin.”

From this it is no long step to remember the sick, the needy, and those who mourn, whether for friends departed or for sins committed. His charity is wide enough to embrace them all. So the

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beautiful prayer ascends as the incense into the presence of Him Who has promised, "If ye shall ask anything in My name, I will do it."

"Watch by the sick, enrich the poor
With blessings from Thy boundless store;
Be every mourner's sleep to-night,
Like infant's slumbers, pure and light."

Then arises the thought of another day with its temptations, its cares, and its duties. The need for guidance and assistance is obvious, and yet it is to be feared that many who would never allow *weariness* to prevent them from saying their prayers at night, do permit *hurry* to interfere with their devotions in the morning. But this ought not so to be. Good John Keble has set us an excellent example. Even though absorbed in his evening devotions he does not forget that God's blessing is the best preparation for the duties of the coming day, and so he closes his Evening Hymn with an anticipatory prayer for a morning blessing :—

"Come near and bless us, when we wake,
Ere through the world our way we take;
Till in the ocean of Thy love
We lose ourselves in heaven above."

We cannot do better, I am persuaded, than model our evening devotions on the plan disclosed in Keble's Evening Hymn.

X.

"Jesu. Lover of my Soul."

WISDOM XI, 26.

"Thou sparest all, for they are Thine, O Lord, Thou Lover of souls."

THE authorship of the hymns used in our public worship forms a very interesting study. The variety in the characters and attainments of the writers of the hymns in one of our large hymnals is little short of astonishing. It is also remarkable what a small proportion of the hymns written by even the most successful authors have become popular.

In that well-known collection, "The Olney Hymns," we find no fewer than 280 hymns by the Rev. John Newton, but not more than three or four of them have retained their popularity to the present day. It may, at first sight, be supposed that the author of "Jesu, Lover of my soul," is an exception to this statement, but this is not so.

It is true that a large number of the Rev. Charles Wesley's hymns are still popular, and may be found

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in almost all hymn books, but it must be remembered that he was a most prolific hymn-writer—producing hymns, not merely by the hundred, but by the thousand. The hymns published during his lifetime numbered 4,100, and he left some 2,000 in manuscript at his death. Thus, even in the case of Charles Wesley, the proportion of popular hymns is small when compared with the number written.

But the number of his popular hymns, when compared with those of most other writers, is very large. In the hymnal known as “Hymns Ancient and Modern,” there are no less than twenty-three of Charles Wesley’s hymns, and in our own “Church Hymns” we find twenty-four by the same author. Amongst them are such favourites as “Hark! the herald-angels sing,” “Head of the Church Triumphant,” “Love divine, all love excelling,” and “Soldiers of Christ arise”; but the most popular of all Charles Wesley’s hymns is the one which claims our consideration this evening: “Jesu, Lover of my soul.”

It is well known that both Charles Wesley and his more famous brother John were clergymen of the Church of England. They were the founders of the Methodist Societies, which have developed into the various branches of present-day Methodism. But neither of the Wesleys ever left the Church of their baptism. Both of them lived and died members of the Church of England. In describing the relationship of each brother towards the evangelical movement, it is usual to ascribe to

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John Wesley the position of *preacher*, and to Charles that of *poet*. But such a distinction is only partly true. Both brothers preached some good sermons, and both wrote some excellent hymns. But, roughly speaking, the distinction is legitimate enough. Each brother had a definite position, and each exercised somewhat diverse gifts in the propagation of the Methodist movement. It is true that we hear much less in the present day about Charles Wesley than we do about his elder brother, but they are both wedded together for all time.

In 1876 a monument was unveiled by Dean Stanley, in Westminster Abbey to the memory of the Wesleys. It consists of a mural tablet, which contains, within a sunken circle, two medallion profiles of the two brothers, with the inscriptions :—

John Wesley, M.A.

Born June 17, 1703 ; died March 2, 1794.

Charles Wesley, M.A.

Born December 18, 1707 ; died March 29, 1788.

On this same tablet is sculptured a representation of John Wesley, preaching from his father's tomb in Epworth churchyard, and underneath is engraved the sentence,

“ I look upon all the world as my parish.”

There is also a well-known saying of Charles Wesley engraved on this tablet :

“ God buries His workmen, but carries on His work.”

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So it may be truly said of John and Charles Wesley that "In their death they were not divided."

But it is with the *poet*, rather than with the *preacher*, that we are concerned this evening.

Charles Wesley, as we have seen, was born in 1707, at Epworth, in Lincolnshire, where his father was rector. He entered Westminster School in 1716, and became a King's Scholar there in 1721, entering Christ Church, Oxford, in 1726. In some respects he was overshadowed by his greater brother, but as a hymn-writer he left John far in the rear. He accompanied his brother to America in 1735, acting as secretary to the managing committee. He had been ordained to the priesthood only a few days before he started on this voyage.

Things did not turn out in accordance with his expectations, so he returned from Georgia just five months after his arrival. He used the utmost diligence in assisting his brother's efforts for the evangelization of England, and although he had not at his command such oratorical powers, he contributed, by his hymns, very largely to make the movement a permanent success. Many of his hymns are celebrated, not merely for their devotional sentiments, but also as specimens of exquisite poetry, and are calculated to endow any cause they endorsed with more or less stability.

He seems to have transmitted his gift of song to his two sons—Charles and Samuel—only in the transmission the gift was transmuted from *poetry* into *music*. Both sons were eminent as organists

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and composers—indeed, Samuel played the organ at the age of three, and composed the well-known oratorio entitled *Ruth* at the age of eight years. Charles Wesley's grandson, Samuel Sebastian Wesley, was also a celebrated organist and famous musician. He was for many years organist of Gloucester Cathedral.

Thus it would appear that the gifted hymn-writer had a supply of music in his soul sufficient to impregnate at least two generations.

We need not wonder, then, that such an unique personality produced such a gem as

“Jesu, Lover of my soul,
Let me to Thy bosom fly,
While the waters nearer roll,
While the tempest still is high.
Hide me, O my Saviour, hide,
Till the storm of life is past ;
Safe into the haven guide,
Oh, receive my soul at last !”

There is a story told in explanation of the origin of this beautiful hymn which is very charming but I have not been able to ascertain whether it be true. The legend is that a helpless dove was being so closely pursued by a hawk that it took shelter in Wesley's bosom, and that this incident started a train of thought which resulted in the hymn. It may well have been so. However, Charles Wesley had little need of the stimulus supplied by such an incident. He would be well acquainted with the

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refuge provided from the Avenger of Blood under the law of Moses.

From the days of his childhood the old-time existence of the six cities of refuge would have been familiar to him. The transference of such a familiar idea to the Lord Jesus Christ would follow almost as a matter of course. And a thoroughly Scriptural idea it is. "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

Well may we all exclaim in the words of Charles Wesley's hymn :

" Other refuge have I none
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee :
Leave—ah ! leave me not alone,
Still support and comfort me.
All my trust on Thee is stayed,
All my help from Thee I bring :
Cover my defenceless head,
With the shadow of Thy wing."

It will be remembered that the manslayer was not safe till he had gained an entrance into the City of Refuge, and we must never forget that his safety depended upon his remaining there. Were he to depart from its protection wittingly, or to wander outside its walls, however unwittingly, should the avenger espy him he was at liberty to slay him !

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What a lesson we have here ! How earnestly should we seek an entrance into the City of our Refuge, and how carefully should we keep inside the fortress when we get there !

In the olden days the roads which led to the City of Refuge were kept in excellent repair, and at intervals signposts were erected with arms pointing in the direction of the city. In letters so large that they who ran could read, the word "Refuge !" was inscribed on the signposts.

It was a case of life and death, and no precaution was omitted to give the offender a chance of escape.

How exceedingly careful then should the sinner be to whom the Refuge means escape from eternal death. There should be no loitering on the road which leads to the City where there is safety for both body and soul for time and for eternity. Jesus is that City of Refuge, and there is no other. "There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." But that One is all-sufficient.

Here is such a City of Refuge as poor sinners need. They require such a plentiful supply of grace as will not merely *make* them pure, but *keep* them pure. This is only to be found within the Refuge. There the Fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness flows perennially, making and keeping the sinner pure within.

I do not know any hymn which has suffered so much at the hands of the critics as "Jesu, Lover of my soul." One may say that it has suffered much

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of many physicians, although it was never sick. Some critics have objected to the phrase, "Lover of my soul," in the first verse, declaring that such an expression ought not to be applied to the Divine Being. It is true that the words do not occur in the canonical Scriptures, but as the text shows they are found in the apocryphal writings.

"Thou sparest all for they are Thine, O Lord, Thou lover of souls."

Here we have the wisdom of Solomon to set against the acumen of modern critics, and we are fully warranted in maintaining that Charles Wesley was justified in addressing the Saviour of the world as "Jesu, Lover of my soul." But not only has the first verse been tampered with, but every verse and almost every line has undergone so-called improvement.

The second line of the last verse as it was written by Wesley reads "Grace to cleanse from every sin," but even of this line we find various amendments, one of them being "Grace to cover all my sin." Well, this is indeed a prayer that should arise from every penitent heart: "Grace to cover all my sin." But we require something more. I would much prefer to have the stain of my sin washed out, so that not a trace of it should remain, than to have it merely hidden from view. And this being so, I prefer to use the form of words as they were left by the poet. I feel that I need to be plunged in the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness, and I read in the Holy Book that "The blood of Jesus

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Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin." There-
fore I rejoice to sing and pray :

"Plenteous grace with Thee is found,
Grace to cleanse from every sin ;
Let the healing streams abound ;
Make and keep me pure within :
Thou of Life the Fountain art ;
Freely let me take of Thee ;
Spring Thou up within my heart,
Rise to all eternity." *Amen.*

XI.

“Abide with me.”

PSALM XCI. I.

“He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.”

IT has been suggested that if we could take a plebiscite of English-speaking Christian people on the subject of their favourite hymn, that “Abide with me” would come out at the top. Lyte’s masterpiece is indeed a noble hymn, but I am not quite sure that it is a greater popular favourite than Toplady’s “Rock of Ages,” or even than Charles Wesley’s “Jesu, Lover of my soul.” I am told, however, that “Abide with me” is far and away the most popular hymn amongst American Christians of all denominations, and if so, it would command a very large vote indeed. It is a hymn that appeals to every Christian heart. It is found appropriate by the dwellers in the cottage and in the castle, and has even found a welcome in the palace itself. It is a favourite with our gracious Queen Alexandra, and she has quite recently become the possessor of a water-colour sketch

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depicting the little town and harbour of Lower Brixham, in Devon, as it appeared to Henry Francis Lyte on the evening of Sunday, September 4th, 1847, as he sat down to write this charming hymn. He had been vicar of the parish for twenty-five years, but he was never very robust, and now his strength was failing fast, and he was, as he doubtless suspected, spending his last evening in this dearly-loved spot. Next day he started for the Riviera, with the restful words of this beautiful hymn upon his lips and in his heart. He never returned to his dear friends and parishioners of Lower Brixham. He passed away in a few weeks at Nice, and was buried there in the English Cemetery, where his grave is marked by a marble cross.

Several of Lyte's other hymns are also popular, and are found in most hymnals. Such are, "Far from my heavenly home," "God of mercy, God of grace," "Pleasant are Thy courts above," "Praise, my soul, the King of heaven," and others. But "Abide with me" is certain to endure as long as the English tongue itself, thus fulfilling the ardent desire of its author, "that he might leave behind him something that would live to the glory of God." This wish he had beforetime expressed both in prose and verse:—

"Oh, might I leave behind
Some blessing for my fellows, some fair trust,
To guide, to cheer, to elevate my kind,
When I was in the dust!

Abide with me. So

“Death would be sweeter then,
More calm my slumber 'neath the silent sod:
Might I thus live to bless my fellow-men
Or glorify my God!

“O Thou Whose touch can lend
Life to the dead, Thy quickening grace supply,
And grant me, swan-like, my last breath to spend
In song that may not die!”

Was ever prayer more literally answered? His last breath was employed in producing “Abide with me”—a hymn that has cheered thousands in their day of trouble to the praise and glory of God. Henry Francis Lyte was a poet of no mean order, but he was overshadowed by such great names as Byron, Scott, Wordsworth, Campbell, Southey, and others, who were his contemporaries. He was born in Roxburghshire, June 1st, 1793. He was educated in Ireland at the Portora Royal School, and in due course entered Trinity College, Dublin, where he graduated in 1814. During his undergraduate career he successfully competed (three times successively) for the prize offered for the best English poem. At first his intention was to study medicine, but he abandoned the idea, and was ordained deacon in the year 1815, his first curacy being at Tagmon, in the County Wexford. He was advised, however, to seek a more suitable climate, and removed to Marazion, in Cornwall. It was during his stay here that he was so deeply impressed with the vast importance of spiritual

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things. The illness and death of a brother clergyman seems to have so profoundly affected him that it influenced the whole of his after career. Concerning this clergyman's death-bed he has written:—"He died happy, under the belief that though he had deeply erred, there was *One* Whose death and sufferings would atone for his delinquencies, and be accepted for all that he had incurred;" and concerning its effect upon himself, he adds:—"I was greatly affected by the whole matter, and brought to look at life and its issue with a different eye than before; and I began to study my Bible and preach in another manner than I had previously done."

Henry Lyte also held curacies at Lymington, in Hampshire, and at Charlton, in Devonshire. At Lymington he wrote "Tales on the Lord's Prayer" and many other poems. In 1823 he became Perpetual Curate of Lower Brixham, which appointment he held until his death on November 20th, 1847.

His daughter tells us, in graphic terms, how he spent his last day at Lower Brixham. He had arranged to start for his holiday on Monday, September 5th, 1847. His family were surprised and almost alarmed at his announcing his intention of preaching once more to his people. His weakness, and the possible danger attending the effort, were urged to prevent it, but in vain. "It is better," he used often playfully to say, "to wear out than to rust out." He felt that he would be enabled to fulfil his wish, and feared not for the result. His expecta-

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tion was well-founded. He did preach, and amid the breathless attention of his hearers, gave them a sermon on Holy Communion. He afterwards assisted at the administration of the Holy Eucharist, and though necessarily much exhausted by the exertion and excitement of this effort, yet his friends had no reason to believe it had been hurtful to him.

In the evening of the same day he placed in the hands of a near and dear relative, the little hymn, "Abide with me," with an air of his own composing adapted to the words.

Such, in a few brief sentences, is the history of the origin of this beautiful hymn.

"Abide with me! fast falls the eventide;
The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide!
When other helpers fail, and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, Oh, abide with me!"

What a touching and complete prayer is contained in this single verse. Few of us can proclaim that it is not suitable to our condition. Long before we approach the eventide of life, we experience the need of that Friend Who sticketh closer than a brother. The anxieties and responsibilities of our position, even during the sunlit days of our youth and prime, impress us with our need of a loving and all-powerful Protector and ever-present Guide. But much more is this need felt when the deepening shadows of eventide begin to darken our path. Almost imperceptibly there grows upon

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us the sense of our dependence upon others. The step loses something of its elasticity, the buoyancy of our earlier days gives place to depression, and the vision loses, gradually it may be, but none the less certainly, much of its keenness. Then we think of "other helpers," and are comforted by the thought that we are surrounded by kind hearts and willing hands. But we think again, and our second thought is of the helpers that fail.

" Friend after friend departs,
Who hath not lost a friend ?
There is no union here of hearts
That finds not here an end."

Now what we require is not a departing friend, but an abiding friend, and there is only one such. Such a friend we have in Jesus, and there is none other such friend. No wonder then that Henry Lyte's hymn has become so popular. It applies the Balm of Gilead to our wounded spirits. In a world of chance and change it points to the changeless One with Whom is no variableness neither shadow of turning. It tells of the Friend Who remains the same "yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." Such is the Friend we need—the Friend indeed.

" Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day ;
Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away
Change and decay in all around I see ;
O Thou, Who changest not, abide with me !"

Yes, and at the longest it is only a "little day."

Abide with me. So

With this estimate the words of the Psalmist are in complete agreement, "Behold, Thou hast made my days, as it were, a span long; and mine age is even as nothing in respect of Thee; and verily every man living is altogether vanity." "The days of our age are threescore years and ten; and though men be so strong, that they come to fourscore years; yet is their strength then but labour and sorrow; so soon passeth it away and we are gone." "So teach us to number our days: that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."

Henry Lyte was well acquainted with this prayer of the Psalmist, but he knew also the waywardness of the human heart. He remembered that the Master in His own prayer took notice of the "tempter's power," teaching His disciples to sue for help at the throne of grace: "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." With this beautiful model for his guidance, and his own humiliating experience of the "tempter's power," he is led to offer an earnest petition for grace to help in every time of need.

"I need Thy presence every passing hour;
What but Thy grace can foil the tempter's power?
Who like Thyself my guide and stay can be?
Through cloud and sunshine, Oh, abide with me!

"I fear no foe, with Thee at hand to bless;
Ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness.
Where is death's sting? where, grave, thy victory?
I triumph still, if Thou abide with me!"

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Upon a remarkable occasion in the history of the Israelites, Moses expressed his reluctance to enter upon a difficult enterprise except he was sustained by the presence of the Lord. His request was, "If Thy Presence go not with me, carry us not up hence." The answer to this prayer came simultaneously with its utterance. There was no waiting, no hesitation on God's part. "And He said, My Presence shall go with thee." Foes, and ills, and tears, and death, and the grave need have no terrors for the Christian man or woman who feels the near presence of the Almighty.

Such was the teaching of one who had himself been a learner in the school of adversity. This man knew what he was writing about from sad experience. Brilliant in mind, but feeble in body, he was prompted by the instincts of intellect to soar aloft into the abodes of genius, but the frail tenement of clay, which he inhabited, so weighed him down and impeded his flights, that the temptation to murmur could only be repressed by the Presence of God.

His position was that of the wingless bird, which possessing all the instincts of flight, finds its efforts foiled by the want of suitable instruments.

And yet it was this man who wrote at the very close of his career :

"I triumph still, if Thou abide with me!"

What a lesson for poor struggling humanity!

Abide with me. Sc

No wonder this hymn has become a favourite with prince and peasant alike !

And then the summing up is superb. I know of no more suitable aspiration for those nearing death than is contained in the final verse of the hymn :

“ Hold then Thy Cross before my closing eyes ;
Shine through the gloom, and point me to the skies,
Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee !
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me ! ”

XII.

**** Oh! for a closer walk with God.****

GENESIS V. 24.

“And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.”

THE author of the hymn on which I am to address you this evening was William Cowper. Many of our best known hymn-writers have not been great poets, and many of our greatest poets have not been very successful hymn-writers. But in William Cowper we have that rare combination — a great poet and a gifted hymn-writer in the same person.

His well-known poem named, “The Task,” holds a similar position in English literature to Thomson’s “Seasons,” or Young’s “Night Thoughts,” and some critics have held even that it compared not unfavourably with Milton’s “Paradise Lost.”

In any case he certainly takes rank as a great poet, and his sixty-eight Olney Hymns contain a sufficient number of gems to entitle him to rank amongst our greatest hymn-singers. “Oh! for a

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closer walk with God" is number one on the list of Cowper's Olney Hymns, although it was not the first hymn that he wrote after settling at Olney. The first hymn was "Jesus, where'er Thy people meet," and it was composed on the opening of a room for the purpose of a weekly prayer meeting.

The last hymn on the list is one of Cowper's finest productions. It is well known from its opening words: "God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform," and it is considered to almost equal in beauty of composition and loftiness of sentiment, that masterpiece amongst his hymns: "Oh! for a closer walk with God."

Several others of Cowper's hymns still remain very popular. Amongst them, "Hark! my soul, it is the Lord," and "There is a fountain filled with blood," may be mentioned. But although this man was a prince amongst writers of prose and poetry, his memoirs are to my mind, very sad reading. He was born in 1731, at Berkhamstead Rectory, in Hertfordshire, where his father was rector.

The first of his many great troubles overtook him at the early age of six years, when his mother died. It is evident that her tenderness and gentleness had made a lasting impression on her little son, for when, some fifty-three years after her death, he was presented with her picture, he wrote one of the most touching elegies ever penned.

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“My mother! when I learned that thou wast dead,
Say, wast thou conscious of the tears I shed?
Hovered thy spirit o’er thy sorrowing son,
Wretch even then, life’s journey just begun?
Perhaps thou gav’st me, though unfelt, a kiss,
Perhaps a tear, if souls can weep in bliss—
Ah, that maternal smile! it answers—Yes,
I heard the bell tolled on thy burial day,
I saw the hearse that bore thee slow away,
And, turning from my nursery window, drew
A long, long sigh, and wept a last adieu!
But was it such? It was. Where thou art gone
Adieus and farewells are a sound unknown.”

Cowper’s schooldays were not happy. At the age of eighteen he left school, and entered an attorney’s office, where he remained for three years. We next find him a law student in the Temple, where he remained for twelve years, in which period he endured two serious attacks of mental derangement. During the second of these attacks he developed suicidal tendencies and had to be secluded in a home for the insane, at St. Alban’s, where he remained for eight months. Upon his recovery a home was found for him in the little county town of Huntingdon. Here he made the acquaintance of the Unwins, and shortly afterwards of that remarkable man, the Rev. John Newton, then Curate-in-charge of Olney. This was the clergyman who induced Cowper to write the Olney Hymns, to which collection he himself contributed no less than 280 items, one of the best-known being “How sweet the name

Oh! for a closer walk with God. So

of Jesus sounds." Mr. Morley Unwin was a clergyman, and was rector of Grimston, in Norfolk. One Sunday morning, soon after making the acquaintance of Cowper, he was killed whilst riding to his church.

Mrs. Unwin and Cowper, on the advice of Newton, removed to Olney in 1767, and for nineteen years this was the poet's home. Here, almost all his poems, hymns, and letters were written—many of them in the summer-house which the poet had erected in his garden, with his own hands.

This is one of the classic spots visited by all the pilgrims to Cowper-land. It still exists much as it was when Cowper, advised and aided by his cousin, Lady Hesketh, bade farewell to Olney and took up his abode at Weston. But his great friend, John Newton, had departed from Olney, before him, having removed to London. Newton was succeeded by the Rev. Thomas Scott, the Commentator; but good man as he was, he only succeeded in impressing the poet with his powers of scolding his congregation in his sermons. The Rev. William Bull, a neighbouring Independent Minister became much more of a favourite. Bull was not, however, quite faultless in Cowper's estimation, for after giving a long list of his perfections, the poet, more in sorrow than in anger, is forced to exclaim, "But he smokes tobacco; nothing is perfect."

However, although a non-smoker himself, the

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companionship of the tobacco-smoking minister became one of the delights of his life.

And when you visit Olney you will be shown, amongst other Cowper relics, the recess in the summer-house floor, which he constructed for the accommodation of the Rev. Mr. Bull's tobacco pipes. And if you read his poems you will find one written on June 22nd, 1782, addressed to the Rev. William Bull, and closing with the words :

“And so may smoke-inhaling Bull
Be always filling, never full.”

At Weston Cowper remained for ten years. Here he made his translation of Homer, and wrote some important poems. He was, however, overtaken by another of his attacks, and was removed to East Dereham, in Norfolk, where his faithful friend, Mrs. Unwin, died in 1796. The poet outlived her less than four years, and was buried by her side in St. Edmund's Chapel, East Dereham Church.

On the monument over his remains there is a touching inscription written by his friend Hayley. The closing lines proclaim an undoubted truth :—

“His highest honours to the heart belong :
His virtues formed the magic of his song.”

Such then was the author of the hymn :

“Oh ! for a closer walk with God,
A calm and heavenly frame ;
A light to shine upon the road
That leads me to the Lamb !”

Oh! for a closer walk with God. So

There are some hymns in our hymn books which thoughtful people decline to sing. They will tell you that the aspirations expressed are so lofty and so far above their desires, that to join in singing such hymns seems to them devoid of reality. But here we have a hymn breathing the holiest and loftiest aspirations, and yet every member of a congregation can heartily join in singing it. I quite agree that it is not everyone who can honestly sing Horatius Bonar's beautiful hymn,

"Thy way, not mine, O Lord,
However dark it be."

A good clergyman once told me that he dreaded to hear his people join lustily in that verse of Faber's hymn which expresses a yearning to be called away from earth to heaven, which not one in twenty of them really felt. He had in his mind, no doubt, the verse beginning:

"Oh Paradise! Oh Paradise!
'Tis weary waiting here."

Now, to this Olney hymn no such objection can be raised. Every member of a congregation, whether good or bad, can honestly express a heartfelt desire for "a closer walk with God," and where is the man or woman who does not sigh for that "calm and heavenly frame" of mind which springs from a "closer walk with God."

Cowper might well have selected as the motto for this hymn the words of the Apostle St. James,

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Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you" (St. James iv. 8). So you see that the opening aspiration is not only thoroughly reasonable, but thoroughly scriptural, and is well calculated to give expression to the desire of every worshipper. And what prayer can be more appropriate to those who are travelling through a vale of darkness than the prayer for light! We have, thank God, the light of His Holy Book to guide our steps aright, but we need the aid of the Holy Spirit to enable us to say with the Psalmist, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path."

The prayer for light, more light, may well ascend from all our hearts as we journey through this vale of tears to the better land beyond. And this brings us to the second verse.

"What peaceful hours I once enjoyed!
How sweet their memory still!
But they have left an aching void
The world can never fill."

Few moments in life are more fraught with happiness than those in which we contemplate hours of sweet intercourse with dear ones who have passed away. And yet with all their sweetness there is felt, deep down in the heart, a want that can never in this world be supplied. This is a rough illustration of the condition of the lapsed Christian. The memory of the peace that was once enjoyed mingles with the feeling of present alienation from God, which no amount of worldly excitement can obliterate.

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This feeling of a want, this aching void in the soul is often the precursor to the prodigal's return. He, like the son in the parable, comes to himself. He becomes conscious of his own wretchedness and ingratitude, and he offers some such prayer as that so beautifully and pathetically sketched in this hymn.

“ Return, O holy Dove, return,
Sweet messenger of rest :
I hate the sins that made Thee mourn,
And drove Thee from my breast.

“ The dearest idol I have known,
Whate'er that idol be,
Help me to tear it from Thy throne,
And worship only Thee.”

Never has the prayer of penitence and sorrow been more touchingly expressed than in these two verses. The holy Dove, whose banishment is due to our sins, is of course God the Holy Ghost. Well may we hate the grievous sin that causes the Holy Spirit mournfully to abandon His home in our hearts. Oh, think of it! How thoughtless Christian people can become! They know that they have been born again of the Holy Spirit, and that He has taken up His abode in their hearts; and yet they will set up in that sacred shrine coarse and godless idols, and so grieve the pure spirit of God that He is forced to depart. Oh, the sin of it! Oh, the sadness of it! This is the sin against which St. Paul warns us in his Epistle to the Ephesians,

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“Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice. And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you. Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children: And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour.”

Now, let us resolve, God helping us, to tear the idol from our hearts, “whate’er that idol be.” Remember the heart ought to be the Holy Spirit’s throne. Think of the sin of setting some horrid idol in His place. Oh, no, God helping us we shall do nothing so base. And should we feel that our sins have grieved and banished the pure and Holy One from His throne, then let our prayer for help ascend to the mercy-seat of God in the beautiful words of Cowper’s hymn :

“ The dearest idol I have known,
 Whate’er that idol be,
Help me to tear it from Thy throne,
 And worship only Thee.

“ So shall my walk be close with God,
 Calm and serene my frame ;
So purer light shall mark the road
 That leads me to the Lamb.”

XIII.

** Rock of Ages. **

I CORINTHIANS X. 4

"That Rock was Christ."

ONCE upon a time I was having a little discussion with an erudite and thoughtful friend about the Wesleys. He had just made the statement that John Wesley was the *preacher* and Charles Wesley was the *poet* of the Methodist Movement, when, looking hard at me, he asked, "Which would you prefer to be, a great preacher, or a great hymn-writer?" I hesitated for a moment, and then I informed my friend that if he were in a position to confer such a distinction, I should prefer to be a great hymnist.

I have often thought over my friend's question, and have long ago come to the conclusion, that no gift is more strongly to be desired than the ability to produce a popular hymn. This conclusion is supported by no less an authority than Archbishop

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Alexander, of Armagh. Here is what he says: "The theologian is for the educated few; the preacher is for one generation; the hymnist speaks an imperishable language, which is never a dead language; of repentance, of confession, of reconciliation, of hope, of adoration, of yearning towards an ideal world where Christ is King; where all hearts turn to Him as the flowers turn to the sunlight, and drink in the sunbeams of His presence, softly and silently for ever."

I quite agree that the writer of such a hymn as we have under our consideration this evening, "speaks an imperishable language." Augustus Montague Toplady, the author of "Rock of Ages," was a clergyman of the Church of England. He was born on November 4th, 1740, at Farnham, in Surrey. He was not quite a year old when his father, Major Toplady, was killed at the Siege of Carthage, and Augustus was left dependent on the care of his mother. As he grew up she placed him for a short time at Westminster School. She was evidently a tender mother, and her kindness made a deep impression on her boy. When at Westminster he kept a diary and gives a charming account of his mother's fondness for him, which he contrasts with his uncle's hardness and unkind speeches. He also transcribed some prayers and sermons, boyish indeed, but very remarkable from a lad of his age. In 1755, his mother removed to Ireland, and young Toplady was entered at Trinity College, Dublin, where he graduated in 1760. It was in Ireland also that he

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was converted by the preaching of a follower of Wesley named James Morris, whose sermon he had heard in a barn.

At first he held what is known as Armenian doctrine, and professed himself a follower of Wesley. But this phase of his belief did not last long. He soon became an extreme Calvinist and attacked Wesley with considerable ferocity. It must, however, be admitted that Wesley retorted with unwonted bitterness.

I do not know a sadder page in the history of religious movements than that which depicts those two good men vigorously assailing each other. I often wonder how two such thoroughly well-instructed Christians managed to ignore the teaching of St. Paul in his first Epistle to the Corinthians : " Charity suffereth long, and is kind ; charity envieth not ; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up. Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil : Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth ; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things " (chapter xiii. 4, 5, 6, 7).

Here we have a clear case for the necessity of the apostle's warning : " Wherefore, let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall " (1 Cor. x. 12.)

Toplady was ordained deacon in 1762, and was appointed to the curacy of Blagdon. There is a tradition that the symbolism of this hymn was suggested to the young curate as he passed on his

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rounds a remarkable rock in a gorge in Blagdon parish. It is difficult to establish the truth of this story, but such a rock is still shown to tourists and described as Toplady's "Rock of Ages."

He remained some two years at Blagdon, but upon his ordination to the priesthood, removed to Farleigh. In 1768, he became vicar of Broad Hembury, which position he held till his death. In 1775, he showed signs of phthisis, and was advised to reside in London. He did not, however, remain idle. He ministered to the French Calvinist Reformed Church almost till his death in 1778, at the early age of thirty-eight years. He was buried in Tottenham Court Chapel, and a marble tablet was erected to his memory, with the opening words of his celebrated hymn for a motto :

"Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee."

This hymn was a favourite with the Prince Consort, and its words were often upon his lips and gave him great consolation during his last illness. It was also held in high estimation by the late Mr. Gladstone, whose translation of it into Latin, "Jesus, pro me perforatus," is very beautiful.

The date of this hymn in a complete state, would appear to be 1776. Toplady was the editor of the *Gospel Magazine*. In the March number, 1776, appeared a curious calculation going to show that it would be impossible for the English Government

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ever to pay off the National debt. Then followed a calculation intended to ascertain how many sins, each of the human race is guilty of, supposing a person was to break the law (1) but *once* in 24 hours ; (2) *twice* in the same time ; (3) once in every hour ; (4) once in every minute ; (5) once in every second. Then taking a sin per second as the basis of his calculation, he proceeds to sum up the dreadful account. At ten years old, each of us is chargeable with 315 millions of sins. At twenty, with 630 millions. At thirty, with 945 millions. At forty, with 1,261 millions. At fifty, with 1,576 millions. At sixty, with 1,892 millions. At seventy, with 2,207 millions. At eighty, with 2,522 millions.

Next is asked the question, "When shall we be able to *pay off* this immense debt?" The reply is in one word—Never. Then follows another question, "Will not Divine goodness *compound* for the debt, by accepting *less* than we owe?" The reply to this question is also given in one word—Impossible. Is there then no hope? Oh, yes, there is. In answer to another query we read: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the Law ; being made a curse for us" (Gal. iii. 13). This, this will not only *counter-balance*, but infinitely over-balance, ALL the sins of the WHOLE believing world.

We must of course remember that at this time Toplady was a most ardent Calvinist. He winds up this exceedingly strange article with this statement: "We can only admire and bless the Father, for electing us in Christ, and for laying on Him the iniquities

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of us all ; the Son for taking our nature and our debts upon Himself, and for that complete righteousness and sacrifice, whereby He redeemed His mystical Israel from *all* their sins ; and the co-equal Spirit for causing us (in conversion) to feel our need of Christ, for inspiring us with faith to embrace Him, for visiting us with the sweet consolations by shedding abroad His love in our hearts, for sealing us to the day of Christ, and for making us to walk in the path of His commandments."

Following this summary of doctrine we find what Toplady describes as "A living and dying *Prayer* for the Holiest Believer in the world."

"Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee,
Let the Water and the Blood,
From Thy riven side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Cleanse me from its guilt and power.

"Not the labours of my hands
Can fulfil Thy law's demands ;
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears for ever flow,
All for sin could not atone ;
Thou must save, and Thou alone.

"Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Thy Cross I cling ;
Naked, come to Thee for dress ;
Helpless, look to Thee for grace ;
Foul, I to the Fountain fly ;
Wash me, Saviour, or I die.

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“ While I draw this fleeting breath,
When my eyelids close in death,
When I soar through tracts unknown,
See Thee on Thy Judgment Throne;
Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee.”

Such, in a few words, is the history of the production of this remarkable hymn. If not the prime favourite it is certainly one of the half-dozen most popular hymns extant. I do not for a moment suppose that its author fully understood the magnificence of the gift that he was bestowing on the Christian Church. But gradually the hymn has won its way into the hearts and affections of millions of Christian people. How has it attained such a position? What are the qualities which have secured for it such popular appreciation? There must be some substantial reason for its great popularity. What is it then? Well, looking at the hymn as a whole, its leading feature is the entire and complete dependence of the sinner upon the Saviour. This is, I believe, the magnetism which proves so attractive to countless thousands of our race who feel that their only plea for pardon is the “one perfect and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world.” The opening lines of the hymn remind us that we need a hiding-place. The evangelical prophet Isaiah had predicted the blessings which would attend the Messiah’s coming, under the figures of a *covert* and a *rock*. “A man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from

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the tempest ; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land ” (Isaiah xxxii. 2).

Then the figure of Christ as the cleft rock seems to have suggested to the poet the scene on the hill-top of Calvary, when a thoughtless soldier with one spear-thrust fulfilled two important prophecies. “ But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side, and forthwith came there out blood and water ” (St. John xix. 34).

And so the prayer of the hymn proceeds :

“ Let the Water and the Blood,
From Thy riven side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Cleanse me from its guilt and power.”

It is a great boon to be purified from the *guilt* of sin. But we need much more than this cleansing. We require to have the chains of our slavery removed, and sin’s mastery over us overthrown. To be cleansed from the *power* of sin as well as from its stain—this is complete emancipation, and such is the twofold deliverance for which we are taught to pray. Labour and zeal and tears are right and proper in their place, God forbid that anyone of us should be lacking in such witnesses to the sincerity of our repentance. But it is not their place to make atonement for sin, nor can they stand as the meritorious cause of our justification in the sight of an All-holy God.

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And these remarks apply equally to the gifts and devotions which every loving, grateful soul will feel bound to offer gladly as an outpouring of love to the precious Saviour.

God forbid, again I say, that anyone of us should be so lacking in gratitude as to do nothing for Him Who has done so much for us! But as a payment to procure our salvation or as a ransom for our sins! No, No! In the matter of salvation Toplady has given exact expression to the sinner's position :

“ Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Thy Cross I cling ;
Naked, come to Thee for dress ;
Helpless, look to Thee for grace ;
Foul, I to the Fountain fly ;
Wash me, Saviour, or I die.”

The sooner we fervently offer this prayer the better. We have no lease of life. The breath in our nostrils may well be described as *fleeting*. At the longest we soon draw it for the last time. And then? What then? So far as the body is concerned, “eyelids closed in death” by some loving hand. But the soul commences a new and glorious career—“soars,” as the hymn puts it, “through tracts unknown,” and enters the Paradise of God ; there to await the setting up of the Great White Throne, and the Open Books, and the Saviour Judge.

How solemn to contemplate such dread events !

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“ While I draw this fleeting breath,
When my eyelids close in death,
When I soar through tracts unknown,
See Thee on Thy Judgment Throne;
Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee.”

Augustus Toplady was perfectly right when he described this hymn as “A living and a dying prayer for the Holiest Believer in the world.”

XIV.

“A few more years shall roll.”

I CORINTHIANS VII. 29.

“The time is short.”

THE hymn for our consideration this evening was written by Dr. Horatius Bonar. In one of his little books, “Songs of Faith and Hope,” he calls it “A Pilgrim’s Song.” It was really written for the New Year, and was sung for the first time on New Year’s Day, 1843, in Dr. Bonar’s own church at Kelso. It is a very suitable hymn either for the end of an old year or the beginning of a new one, or, indeed, for any other season when the mind is impressed with the rapid departure of our little span of time. It is a beautiful hymn, but very solemn, and not without a tinge of sadness. It is, however, in this respect only in keeping with most of Dr. Bonar’s lyrics. He was a very gifted man, but there is a touch of melancholy as well as solemnity underlying a large proportion of his writings. I could quote you numerous instances of this trait in the character of his hymns, but one will be sufficient. In a

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charming little poem called "Our One Life," we can trace this tone of sadness, although intermingled with words and ideas that are solemnly beautiful.

" 'Tis not for man to trifle! Life is brief,
And sin is here.
Our age is but the falling of a leaf,
A dropping tear.
We have no time to sport away the hours,
All must be earnest in a world like ours.

" Not *many* lives, but only *one* have we,
One, only one ;
How sacred should that one life ever be,
That narrow span!
Day after day filled up with blessed toil,
Hour after hour still bringing in new spoil."

Dr. Bonar's lyrics, hymns, and other writings are very numerous, but they always show that their author was a scholar of no mean degree. There is a gracefulness in his style, and a fancifulness in his allusions, which indicate a high degree of culture. And although, as I have said, there is a pensiveness in the tone of his writings, they are by no means solely emotional, but are in the main founded upon correct conceptions of Holy Scripture.

Dr. Bonar was very successful as a hymnist. His fame does not depend, as does that of many hymn-writers, on one or two specimens. At least a score of his hymns have become popular favourites. In our own hymnal, "Church Hymns," there are no less than ten from Bonar's pen, and they are all

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delightful poems as well as charming hymns. I may just mention his well-known Communion hymn :—

“ Here, O my Lord, I see Thee face to face ;
Here faith can touch and handle things unseen ;
Here would I grasp with firmer hand Thy grace,
And all my weariness upon Thee lean.”

Then we have also in our hymnal Bonar's “ I see the crowd in Pilate's hall,” “ The Church has waited long,” “ Thy way, not mine, O Lord,” and “ I heard the voice of Jesus say.” This was the hymn which the late Bishop Fraser of Manchester described as the best in the English language. In “ Church Hymns ” it is deemed worthy of a setting to two different tunes—one by Sullivan and the other by Barnby.

Naturally, Bonar's hymns and lyrics are very popular with the three Presbyterian Churches (if there be three) in Scotland, and the Irish Presbyterians as well as those of England cherish his memory and have a warm corner in their hearts for his poems. Indeed, he has been placed as a hymnologist on a par with Charles Wesley, but I do not consider that he quite occupies such an eminent position. However, it is quite clear that his reputation as a hymn-writer stands very high, although the popular taste does not, perhaps, place him in the front rank.

Horatius Bonar was born in Edinburgh on December 19th, 1808. His family belonged to

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the Presbyterian Established Church, and Horatius in due course (after a successful career at the University of Edinburgh) became a minister of that Church. His first appointment was at Leith, from which sphere he was transferred to Kelso in 1837. There was much commotion about this time in the Presbyterian Church, which ultimately led to what is known as the Disruption, and in 1843 Bonar left the Established Church for the Free Church, but he still remained at Kelso, and carried on his ministry there in connection with the Free Kirk.

In 1853 the University of Aberdeen made him a Doctor of Divinity. He remained at Kelso till 1866, when he removed to the Chalmers Memorial Church, Edinburgh. Some seventeen years later he attained to the premier position in the ministry of his church, becoming Moderator of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland.

His publications had always a very large sale. One of his first Evangelical Books, "God's Way of Peace," sold almost immediately to the number of 285,000 copies. Another book of his, published about the same time, sold to the extent of 59,000 copies.

Dr. Bonar was also a contributor to the "Imperial Bible Dictionary" and to "Smith's Bible Dictionary." He was a most energetic man, and from time to time we find him editing periodicals, journals, and reviews in almost bewildering profusion.

He departed this life in the city of Edinburgh on 31st July, 1889, having passed the Psalmist's limit

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of fourscore years. Thus he showed that an immense, if judicious, activity need not shorten a man's days. But when all is told concerning his extraordinary activity, it still seems certain that his fame as a hymn-writer will be the most enduring. It is stated that his best hymns were produced almost spontaneously, and this, no doubt, was so, for many of them bear the mark of spontaneity and lack of effort.

One who was well qualified to judge of the merits of such writings as Dr. Bonar has left behind him, has summed up his conclusions in the following terms:—

“Dr. Bonar's hymns satisfy the fastidious by their instinctive good taste; they mirror the life of Christ in the soul, partially, perhaps, but with vivid accuracy, they win the heart by their tone of tender sympathy; they sing the truth of God in ringing notes; and although, when taken as a whole, they are not perfect; although in reading them we meet with feeble stanzas, halting rhythm, defective rhyme, meaningless iteration; yet a singularly large number have been stamped with approval, both in literary circles and by the Church.”

Such was the man who wrote the solemn hymn which is so suitable to our circumstances to-night.

“A few more years shall roll,
A few more seasons come,
And we shall be with those that rest
Asleep within the tomb:

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Then, O my Lord, prepare
My soul for that great day :
O wash me in Thy precious Blood,
And take my sins away."

St. Paul in writing to the Roman Christians uses a similar argument in urging them to prepare for "that great day." The shortness of time and the nearness of eternity is the cry with which the great apostle endeavours to awaken sleeping disciples at Rome. "And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep : for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed" (Romans xiii. 11). Never has there been a period in the history of the Christian Church when it was more needful to sound an alarm, than at the present day. Whole hosts of men and women who profess and call themselves Christians are little better than soldiers asleep at their post. The Christian is a soldier of Jesus Christ. Therefore, one of his most important duties is to fight.

St. Paul in writing to his son in the faith—Timothy—encourages him to "Fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life" (1 Timothy vi. 12).

It is a dangerous practice for a soldier to sleep at his post. He may be taken entirely unawares, or he may be aroused just at the critical moment and perform prodigies of valour with his sword, but the odds are against him in such a combat.

This being so, why should Christian people court disaster to their souls? "The time is short," says

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the apostle, "For now is our salvation nearer than when we believed."

Our entrance into Paradise and deliverance from the trials of this life is the salvation here alluded to. This event is drawing nigh. Soon our earthly career will be run.

"A few more suns shall set
O'er these dark hills of time,
And we shall be where suns are not
A far serener clime!"

The apostle and the poet both reason in the same manner. Both argue that it is culpable to waste our time in drowsiness seeing that it is so fleeting. Time is too precious to be frittered away in self-indulgent dreaming. "Let us then be up and doing." This world is not our place of rest. "But there remaineth a rest to the people of God."

"A few more storms shall beat
On this wild rocky shore,
And we shall be where tempests cease,
And surges swell no more :
Then, O my Lord, prepare
My soul for that calm day ;
O wash me in Thy precious Blood,
And take my sins away."

We all know that even while the storm rages over the surface of the earth there is a region of perfect calm above the clouds. Nor is it different with the raging sea. The angry billows may surge and roll on the surface of the ocean, but a little beneath that

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surface there is a region of perfect calm. So ought it to be with our lives here ; and so will it be if our "citizenship is in heaven." However perturbed our earthly lives may be, above and beneath this world's turmoil there will be calm and peace.

I am well aware what a trite and commonplace theme is the brevity of human life. And yet I am bound to say that the impression of its shortness is the crown and glory of our race.

It appears brief to us because we have within us the consciousness of immortality. What follows then? It follows that life would appear long were we deprived of this consciousness. But who would accept the longest life on such a condition? The feeling that life is short should give us pleasure instead of pain, for it is due to our conception of life as immortal.

Having then arrived at the poet's conclusion that

"A few more struggles here,
A few more partings o'er,
A few more toils, a few more tears,
And we shall weep no more :"

What effect should such a conviction have upon our lives? It surely ought to impress us with the importance of preparing for the world to come. If it be true that the fashion of this world quickly passeth away, it is the height of folly not to prepare for that which is eternal.

This, I believe to be the meaning of St. Paul in

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the words that immediately follow my text, "Brethren, the time is short," he says ; "it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none ; and they that weep, as though they wept not ; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not ; and they that buy, as though they possessed not ; and they that use this world, as not abusing it ; for the fashion of this world passeth away."

"'Tis but a little while
And He shall come again,
Who died that we might live, Who lives
That we with Him may reign :
Then, O my Lord, prepare
My soul for that glad day ;
O wash me in Thy precious Blood,
And take my sins away."

XV.

"How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds."

ST. MATTHEW I. 21.

"And thou shalt call His name Jesus; for He shall save His people from their sins."

MANY intelligent people associate the Olney Hymns entirely with the name of the poet Cowper, forgetting that while John Newton wrote 280 of them, William Cowper was the author only of some sixty-eight.

Indeed, it was at Newton's suggestion that Cowper became a contributor to this famous collection of hymns.

The Rev. John Newton was curate-in-charge of Olney, in Buckinghamshire, and during a visit to Huntingdon in 1767, he found that Mrs. Unwin and Cowper were looking out for a new home. He suggested Olney as a desirable place of abode, and his proposal being accepted, and a suitable habitation procured, Cowper and Newton became

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not only dear friends for life, but near neighbours for a period of nineteen years.

Some three years after he had taken up his abode at Olney, Cowper's brother died, and the poet showed symptoms of another mental collapse.

Then it was that Newton, in order to supply him with a congenial occupation, urged Cowper to undertake the composition of the Olney Hymns. But it must be remembered that the items contributed by Newton himself were nearly five times as numerous as those supplied by Cowper. Amongst the former we find the touching hymn which we have for our theme this evening :

“How sweet the Name of Jesus sounds?”

The life of John Newton forms a strange eventful history. He was born in London in 1725, and died in the same city in 1807. His father was a commander in the Merchant Service, and his mother was a religious woman, who trained her little boy in everything that was good, till her death, which occurred when John was only seven years old.

At the age of eleven years he went to sea with his father, and with him made six voyages. These were the days of the press-gang, and young Newton was impressed and taken aboard one of H.M. ships, where he was made a midshipman, but he soon deserted. When recaptured he was reduced to the ranks, and he soon after was put on board a slaver and taken to the coast of Sierra Leone. In this

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degraded position he endured much brutal treatment, till he was fortunately rescued through the instrumentality of his father. He would seem to have lost all idea of religion during his wandering life, and his penitence in after years was deep and heartfelt, when he remembered his excesses. Near the end of his life, when he was advised to give up preaching, he exclaimed, "What, shall the old African blasphemer stop while he can speak?"

One very striking fact in Newton's history is the persistence with which he endeavoured to educate himself. Even when the slave of an African slave-dealer he taught himself the first six books of Euclid, drawing the figures on the sand. He also engaged in other studies, and was so impressed with the beauties of Horace, that he committed the Odes to memory. When he was twenty-three years of age, he met with a copy of "Thomas à Kempis," and was much impressed by his study of it. This impression was deepened into conversion during a night of stress and storm, when he was steering a water-logged vessel, with little hope of escaping death. He was, as we have said, twenty-three years old at this time, but fifteen years elapsed before he was ordained in 1764, to the curacy of Olney, in Buckinghamshire.

During nine of these years he was preparing himself, in various ways, for the ministry. He studied Greek and Hebrew, and made the acquaintance of such men as Whitefield, Wesley, Grimshaw, Venn, Berridge, and Romaine. The year of his

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ordination saw also the publication of a history of his previous life, under the title of "The Authentic Narrative."

Newton's stipend was only £60 a year as curate of Olney, but he had the good fortune to send a copy of "The Authentic Narrative" to an evangelical merchant named Thornton. Mr. Thornton at once wrote offering him £200 a year, and even suggesting that he should appeal for more whenever he required it. Newton's activity at Olney knew no bounds. His zeal in preaching, pastoral visitation, and conducting prayer meetings was unwearied. In this work he was joined, in 1767, by the poet Cowper. Cowper and Mrs. Unwin had settled at Olney, at his suggestion, and the poet and preacher became fast friends. But indeed the preacher was, in some respects, also a poet, though not the equal of William Cowper. As a hymnist, however, he was not left far in the rear.

An eminent authority has stated that "The one splendid hymn of praise in the Olney collection is "Glorious things of Thee are spoken," and this hymn was written by Newton. The same judicious critic tells us that "How sweet the Name of Jesus sounds" is, in scriptural richness, superior, and in structure, cadence, and almost tenderness, equal to Cowper's "Oh, for a closer walk with God."

Newton's closing years at Olney had some discouragements and indicated a weakness in his methods of evangelization. His system did not make sufficient provision for teaching the doctrines he so faithfully

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preached. This was the weak point in his harness, and as the years went on the result was discouraging. Newton was rather glad than sorry to leave Olney for London, when his friend, John Thornton, offered him a benefice there. This was in 1780, and he continued his self-denying labours almost till the day of his death, in 1807.

The name Jesus is in itself a sweet name, but to the believer it is doubly sweet. To the shipwrecked mariner upon his raft the cry of *land* is sweet. To the condemned prisoner in his cell the message of reprieve is sweet. No wonder, then, that the name of Jesus should sound sweetly in the sinner's ears.

Upon one occasion a visitor to Farringford asked Lord Tennyson what he thought of Jesus Christ. They were walking in the garden, and Tennyson was silent for some little time. Then, stopping before a beautiful flower, he said, in his own poetic way,

"What the sun is to that flower, Jesus Christ is to my soul. He is the Sun of my soul."

Such He becomes to every believer the moment He is realised in His true character as the Saviour of sinners.

Few men have ever lived who knew better, from experience, what they were writing than did John Newton, when he penned the words :

"How sweet the Name of Jesus sounds
In a believer's ear!
It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,
And drives away his fear.

How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds.

“It makes the wounded spirit whole,
And calms the troubled breast;
'Tis manna to the hungry soul,
And to the weary rest.”

There was once a student at Cambridge named Thomas Bilney. He was most anxious about his soul's health, but he sought peace with God through fasts and mortifications. He failed, however, to secure the boon he so ardently desired. In a deeply anxious condition of mind, he *chanced*, as he himself expresses it, upon the words of St. Paul, in 1 Timothy i. 15, “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.”

Bilney's own account of the effect that this passage had upon his life reads almost like the first two verses of Newton's hymn turned into prose. “This one sentence,” says Bilney, “through God's instruction, and inward working, which I did not then perceive, did so exhilarate my heart, being before wounded with the guilt of my sins, and being almost in despair, that immediately I felt a marvellous comfort and quietness, inasmuch as my bruised bones leaped for joy.”

Thus we see that Thomas Bilney found in the Name of Jesus balm for his wounds, confidence in his despair, pardon for his sins, comfort, quietness, and joy in the sweet and holy Name of Jesus.

“Dear Name! the Rock on which I build!
My shield and hiding-place!
My never-failing treasury, filled
With boundless stores of grace!

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“Jesus ! my Shepherd, Brother, Friend,
My Prophet, Priest, and King,
My Lord, my Life, my Way, my End,
Accept the praise I bring.”

I wonder how many of us can honestly repeat these two verses ! Let us be honest with ourselves. Thomas Bilney proved the sincerity of his faith by laying down his life sooner than deny the Saviour Who had shed His blood for him. On August 19th, 1531, he was burned in the Lollards' Pit at Norwich, glorying in the sweet Name of Jesus.

Thank God, we in our day have not to endure the test of the faggot and the stake. But we should test ourselves. This we can do by asking and answering some simple, though solemn, questions. Is the dear Name of Jesus the Rock on which I build ? Yes or no ! Do I follow Him as my Shepherd ? Yes or no ! Do I love Him as a Brother ? Yes or no ! Is He my King—the chiefest among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely ? Yes or no ! Is He my Lord, my Life, my Way, my End ? Yes or no !

We should often hold ourselves up to the light and see whether the water-mark on our religion is of the proper date. You remember the case of the fraudulent will. The document appeared to have been properly signed and sealed and duly attested. On the face of it everything seemed in order, and for a time it puzzled a clever lawyer. He chanced, however, to hold it up to the light, and behold, the water-mark bore a more recent date than that of the spurious will. The letting in of the light revealed the fraud.

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We should now and then let the light shine through our religion, lest we may be cherishing fraudulent expectations. It may be very deceptive merely to compare ourselves with our fellows. By such a comparison a man's religion may appear genuine and yet be little better than a fraud. The question is, How does it look in the light of the Gospel? Are we sincere disciples of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ? I do not ask, Are we perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect? That is indeed a high standard, and yet it is set by the Master Himself. But I do ask, Are we sincere in our religious profession? Weak and cold though we be, I do hope that we each and all sincerely love the sweet Name of Jesus.

It is a Name of wondrous Love. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other Name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved."

Even though we deem the two middle verses of this hymn to be expressive of sentiments above our experience, we shall, I trust, be in a position to adopt the concluding verses as our own:

"Weak is the effort of my heart,
And cold my warmest thought;
But when I see Thee as Thou art,
I'll praise Thee as I ought.

"Till then I would Thy love proclaim
With every fleeting breath;
And may the music of Thy Name
Refresh my soul in death." *Amen.*

XVI.

"The Son of God goes forth to War."

I TIMOTHY VI. 12.

"Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life."

THERE is, in my opinion, little doubt that the memory of Reginald Heber will be longest kept green by his missionary hymn, "From Greenland's icy mountains." And yet its composition involved the slightest possible effort. The story of its origin is well known. It was written as far back as 1819, and was first sung at Wrexham Church, on Whit Sunday in that year. It so happened that Heber and a few friends met in the library at Wrexham Vicarage on the Saturday afternoon. The vicar was preparing to preach a missionary sermon next day, and he appealed to Heber to write a suitable hymn for such an occasion. Heber was quite willing to oblige, and, retiring to a corner of the room, wrote (in a quarter of an hour) the first three verses of his best known hymn. He then begged for a little longer silence, and in five more minutes, produced the hymn complete, and it was sung next morning in Wrexham Church for the first time.

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It is as wonderful an example of rapid composition as can be found in any of our hymnals. The original MS. was in after years sold for forty guineas.

Another of Heber's hymns, which is becoming more and more popular as the years roll by, is the charming one for the Epiphany season, beginning "Brightest and best of the sons of the morning." This hymn was first published in 1811. It did not, however, appear in any hymn book till after its author's death, when it was printed in a collection of his own hymns.

The fine hymn which is especially our subject for this evening was dedicated to St. Stephen, and is usually sung on Saints' Days, but it is a stimulating hymn for Christian worship at any season.

" The Son of God goes forth to war,
A kingly crown to gain ;
His blood-red banner streams afar ;
Who follows in His train ? "

The original MS. of this hymn is now in the British Museum. Bishop Heber made a MS. collection of hymns in his own handwriting. This collection afterwards came into the possession of Dean Milman, and remained in his family for many years, when it was presented to the British Museum.

About the time when this hymn first became popular, it was a great favourite with soldiers, who called it the " tug-of-war " hymn. In this connection a very pathetic little story is told by Mrs.

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Ewing in a little work which she designated, "The Story of a Short Life."

A nephew of Colonel Jones, one of the officers stationed at Asholt barracks, met with an accident, which in time proved fatal. The little fellow was a great favourite with the men, and they were continually making inquiries as to his progress. One day they learned that the crippled boy was anxious to hear them sing their "tug-of-war" hymn once more. Soon the soldiers, only too anxious to gratify their favourite, gathered opposite his window, and led by a young officer, a V.C. man, commenced to sing the well-known words. Just as they were singing the last verse, the little sufferer was released from his pain to join "the noble army of men and boys in robes of white arrayed."

"A noble army, men and boys,
The matron and the maid,
Around the Saviour's throne rejoice,
In robes of light arrayed.

"They climbed the steep ascent of heaven
Through peril, toil, and pain ;
O God, to us may grace be given
To follow in their train."

Reginald Heber was born in 1783, at Malpas, in Cheshire. He belonged to a family that had been settled at Marton, in Yorkshire, for several generations. His father, after whom he was named, was a man of considerable attainments, who had been Fellow and tutor of Brasenose College, Oxford.

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Reginald's mother was a Yorkshire woman, being the daughter of the rector of Wath, in this county. He received his early education at Whitchurch Grammar School, and this was followed by private tuition at the Academy of Dr. Bristowe, at Neasden.

Young Heber's educational advantages were only commonplace, and yet his persistent application, coupled to his great ability, enabled him to enter Brasenose College at the age of seventeen years, with the prospect of a brilliant career. He went to Oxford in 1800, and in the same year he won the prize for the "*Carmen Seculare*," a Latin poem on the commencement of the new century.

His next success was even more remarkable. In 1803 he obtained the Newdigate prize for an English poem on the subject of "*Palestine*." This is one of the very few prize poems that have obtained a permanent place in literature. Its publication was hailed with very extraordinary enthusiasm, and it has been reprinted again and again. Heber gained other prizes during his undergraduate course, and in 1805 he was made a Fellow of All Souls' College. Then he thought the time had come when he ought to see something more of the world, so he travelled for nearly two years, accompanied by a friend, in Germany and Russia. In 1807 he returned to England and was ordained, being soon after appointed to the living of Hodnet, which his father had held before him. Here he remained for sixteen years, assiduously devoting himself to the care of his people and to literary work. His hymns were

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produced during this period, and so also were many of his other literary efforts.

But his appointment to the Bishopric of Calcutta brought this portion of his career to a close. He was only forty years of age when, in 1823, he went to India. His episcopate only lasted three years, and yet he left behind him a name for saintly devotion and successful administration. He had the happiness to ordain the first native to the ministry of the Christian Church. His name was Christian David, and you will think that it was a very suitable name for such a man.

Bishop Heber did not spare himself in the wide sphere of his labours in India. He was indefatigable in the discharge of his numerous and exacting duties. His visitations were eagerly welcomed, for he had the knack of cheering the hearts and strengthening the hands of workers wherever he found them. He was on his second visitation in the Madras Presidency when his career was very suddenly closed. He had reached Trichinopoly, where he confirmed forty-two persons on April 3rd, 1826. On his return from the service he retired to his own room, and when his servant entered some time afterwards he found the good bishop in his bath dead. He was buried in the chancel of St. John's Church, Trichinopoly, and his early death was sincerely lamented both in England and in India.

With this slight sketch of Heber's life before us, we shall return, with deeper interest to the consideration of his "Tug-of-war" hymn.

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There is, I fear, a tendency in our day and generation to depict the road that leads to heaven as if it were strewn with flowers. And yet the Master tells us that we must, through much tribulation, enter into the Kingdom of heaven. And He also declares in solemn words, "He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me." And again we read in the Sermon on the Mount, "Not everyone that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven." And experience teaches this same doctrine. Let a man resolve on the attainment of a high ideal in the affairs of this life, and he does not find that it drops into his hand like an over-ripe apple from a tree. He has to labour assiduously in order to secure the object of his desires. He must submit himself to discipline of mind and body, and he often encourages his flagging energies by reminding himself of the proverb, "No cross, no crown."

But the strange thing is, that this same man will expect to secure the unspeakable blessings of eternal life without effort or exertion. He hopes some day to wear the conqueror's crown, although he has never engaged in the warrior's battle. But such a proceeding is as contrary to common sense, as it is to the teaching of the sacred Scriptures. Even to his son in the faith, St. Paul writes the strenuous admonition: "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life."

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It was in this same spirit that Reginald Heber penned this strenuous hymn :—

“The Son of God goes forth to war,
A kingly crown to gain;
His blood-red banner streams afar—
Who follows in His train?
Who best can drink his cup of woe,
Triumphant over pain;
Who patient bears his cross below,
He follows in His train.”

Next we find in this hymn examples of some who have fought the good fight, and laid hold on eternal life.

Naturally enough the first martyr, St. Stephen, heads the list. His cruel death, coupled with his steadfast faith, proclaim him the model Christian hero; and his vision of Jesus Christ standing ready to receive the soul of His servant, together with his prayer for himself and his final prayer for his murderers, proclaim him the model Christian martyr.

“The martyr first, whose eagle eye
Could pierce beyond the grave;
Who saw his Master in the sky,
And called on Him to save.
Like Him, with pardon on his tongue,
In midst of mortal pain,
He prayed for them that did the wrong—
Who follows in his train?”

Who, indeed? The strange title, “Tug-of-war,”

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is no misnomer when applied to this hymn. It is hard to die at the stake even though "a kingly crown" awaits the victim. But it is harder still to sincerely pray, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge," as the cruel stones, or the torturing flames rend soul and body asunder. It requires the very "Spirit of the Master," under such circumstances, to utter the Master's prayer — "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And yet this has been done again and again. Such forbearance and forgiveness is the very essence of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. He emphatically declares in His great sermon, that the maxims of the world are entirely apart from His teaching. "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you ; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven : for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

With such sentiments before his mind the poet remembers that little band, whose faithfulness to their Master's teaching and Person could never be shaken. Neither cross nor sword, nor wild beast, nor fire, could induce them to desert their Saviour or His cause.

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“A glorious band, the chosen few,
On whom the Spirit came;
Twelve valiant saints, their hope they knew,
And mocked the cross and shame,
They met the tyrant’s brandished steel,
The lion’s gory mane;
They bowed their necks the death to feel—
Who follows in their train?”

Very few you think; but your second thought is different. There have been martyrs in many lands and at various periods. Were they all to pass by in marching order they would form a glorious procession. And when we have added to this mighty host all those who suffered for their Master’s cause, and were ready, had need been, to die for His sake, we can easily imagine the procession of the white-robed throng as it is depicted in the Revelation: “These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple: and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them” (Revelation vii. 14, 15).

“A noble army, men and boys,
The matron and the maid,
Around the Saviour’s throne rejoice,
In robes of light arrayed.
They climbed the steep ascent of heaven
Through peril, toil, and pain;
O God, to us may grace be given
To follow in their train.” *Amen.*

XVII.

"The King of Love my Shepherd is."

PSALM XXIII. I.

"The Lord is my Shepherd."

A HYMN-WRITER who enters the lists with Addison and comes out victorious has a strong recommendation to our notice. Such a claim may well be made on behalf of Sir Henry Williams Baker, whose version of the twenty-third Psalm has become so popular in recent years, that it has quite superseded Addison's one-time favourite rendering :

"The Lord my pasture shall prepare,
And feed me with a Shepherd's care ;
His presence shall my wants supply,
And guard me with a watchful eye ;
My noonday walks He will attend,
And all my midnight hours defend."

Sir Henry Baker was a clergyman of the Church of England. He was a famous expert in his day on the subject of hymnology, and he was the chairman

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of the company of compilers who produced "Hymns Ancient and Modern," which was first published in 1861.

This hymnal had an astonishing success. The very title seemed to lay hold of the people, and even those who objected to the theology of several of the hymns, were still fain to use the hymnal as a tune-book.

In this capacity it found its way into many chapels as well as churches, and became known either as a hymn book or a tune book throughout the Christian world.

Another item which led to its popularity was, doubtless, the large number of beautiful hymns which were translations from the Latin, and at one stroke greatly enriched our English Church hymnody.

Certainly, a deep debt of gratitude is due to the memory of Sir Henry Baker for his untiring and self-denying labours in the promotion of congregational singing.

The beautiful hymn for our consideration this evening, can hardly be called a translation, although its author did some creditable work in this direction.

It may be described, however, as a version—an exquisite version, of the twenty-third Psalm. It was written in 1868, and first published in the same year in the appendix to Sir Henry Baker's hymnal.

Dr. Dykes set it to a suitable melody, and it very soon became popular. It is now to be found in most hymnals, as its author never refused the numerous

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requests he received for permission to insert his hymn in other collections.

"The King of Love my Shepherd is," is sometimes found amongst "Communion Hymns," no doubt, because the fifth verse suggests the idea of Holy Communion.

"Thou spread'st a table in my sight,
Thy unction grace bestoweth,
And oh! what transport of delight
From Thy pure chalice floweth."

But it is more usually classed amongst "General Hymns," and as suitable for singing during ordinary public worship.

I may mention that the last words uttered by Sir Henry Baker, as he was departing this life, were the words of the third verse of this hymn:

"Perverse and foolish oft I strayed,
But yet in love He sought me,
And on His shoulder gently laid,
And home, rejoicing, brought me."

I greatly fear that few of us will find the confession in the first line of this verse unsuitable to us in our last hour: "Perverse and foolish oft I strayed." But I do hope that the comforting assurance of the three lines following may be ours, when we come face to face with the King of Terrors:

"But yet in love He sought me,
And on His shoulder gently laid,
And home, rejoicing, brought me."

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Sir Henry Williams Baker was born in 1821, in London. He was the eldest son of Sir Henry Loraine Baker, C.B., a Vice-Admiral of the Fleet. His university career was a fairly successful one. He entered Trinity College, Cambridge, where he graduated in 1844, and became an M.A. in 1847. Soon after taking his B.A. degree, he entered the ministry of the Church, and in 1851, he became vicar of Monksland, in Herefordshire, which benefice he held till his death on February 12th, 1877. It is said that it was at Monksland that Henry Baker wrote his first hymn in the year 1852.

“ Oh, what, if we are Christ's,
Is earthly shame or loss ?
Bright shall the crown of glory be
When we have borne the Cross.”

Another beautiful and touching hymn was written by Sir Henry in 1861, in which year it appeared in the first edition of “ Hymns Ancient and Modern.”

“ There is a blessed home
Beyond this land of woe,
Where trials never come,
Nor tears of sorrow flow ;
Where faith is lost in sight,
And patient hope is crowned,
And everlasting light
Its glory throws around.”

This is a very pathetic hymn, and its pathos is not decreased when we remember that it was sung over the author's grave.

The King of Love my Shepherd is. &c

In many of Sir Henry Baker's hymns there is a strain of tender plaintiveness amounting almost to sadness. He never attempted a florid style, or far-fetched illustrations, but contented himself with a simple earnestness of expression, which is all the more effective owing to its simplicity.

On the death of his father in 1859, he succeeded to the baronetcy, but he remained at Monksland Vicarage till his death in 1877, when his body was laid to rest in the churchyard of the parish, and his spirit returned unto God Who gave it.

He was a man greatly beloved as a parish clergyman, and though so highly gifted in a literary sense, he was never more at home or more happy than when attending to the various duties of his calling in his own parish.

And now, let us examine, in greater detail, the sentiments expressed with such felicity in this charming hymn.

No one could be more highly qualified to sing of the King of Love than was the shepherd king. David had experiences in his youthful days, as he tended his sheep on the plains of Bethlehem, which enabled him to appreciate fully the protecting care of the Good Shepherd. He well knew how dependent was the flock on the tenderness and care and goodness and skill of that one man whose protection and guidance was all in all to the sheep. No wonder then that with this experience in his memory he thinks of himself as the sheep and the great God Almighty as the Shepherd. In the hour of his

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deepest perplexity he remembers that there is a heavenly Guide Who cares for His poor distracted sheep, and looking out of the darkness into the light he exclaims, "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom then shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life, of whom then shall I be afraid?" "The Lord is my Shepherd, therefore shall I lack nothing," or, as we have it in Sir Henry Baker's beautiful version :

"The King of Love my Shepherd is,
Whose goodness faileth never;
I nothing lack, if I am His,
And He is mine for ever."

What a comfort it would be if we could make this verse our own ! It would illuminate our pathway in the cloudy and dark day. And such days do come to us all. I have seen, in a London fog, a group of people clinging to a lamp-post. They were trying, by the aid of the glimmering light, to shape their course aright, but with very limited success. If we take the King of Love for our Shepherd, He will guide us through the darkest hour, for to Him "The night is as clear as the day, yea, the darkness and light to Him are both alike."

But we require something more than guidance on our passage through this wilderness-world. Bread and water are at least necessities, and they are apt types of that spiritual food and drink which we need for our refreshment on the road to the heavenly

The King of Love my Shepherd is. 50

Canaan. The soul requires for its sustenance "living water" and "celestial food," and the Good Shepherd has provided an ample supply of both for our needs.

"Where streams of living water flow,
My ransomed soul He leadeth;
And where the verdant pastures grow,
With food celestial feedeth."

But it is not only on life's journey that we need the Shepherd's care and tending. As we draw nearer and nearer to Jordan's banks we require some words of encouragement to enable us calmly to face "the swelling flood." If we have not wasted our opportunities we ought to be able to look forward to the scene of our departure, with unabated confidence that the Shepherd good will be our guide even unto death. I well know that misgivings do arise. Many a Christian man and woman feel at times constrained to exclaim in the words of Jeremiah, "If thou hast run with the footmen and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?" How indeed!

Very sadly and very badly shall we do except the good Shepherd accompany us into the swelling stream. But it is cheering to remember that the promise of guidance does not stop on the river's brink. "For this God is our God for ever and

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ever: He will be our Guide even unto death (for ever and for aye)."

And lest there should remain the merest remnant of misgiving in any timorous soul, we have the additional promise: "When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee." So then every true sheep of the good Shepherd may, without presumption, use the comforting words of this hymn:

"In death's dark vale I fear no ill,
With Thee, dear Lord, beside me;
Thy rod and staff my comfort still,
Thy Cross before to guide me."

But there is one special source of help and blessing on the road to that heavenly Canaan upon which the poet lays special emphasis.

"Thou spread'st a table in my sight
Thy unction grace bestoweth;
And, oh! what transport of delight
From Thy pure chalice floweth."

That holy table is still spread. The broken bread and the poured-out wine still remind us of that body broken, and blood shed for our sakes on Calvary's Cross. Nay, more. They remind us that although the Saviour has ascended up on high, He is still present to the eye of faith, and as the Catechism teaches, "The Body and Blood of Christ, are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper."

The King of Love my Shepherd is. &c

Thus He has provided for His faithful children
a never-failing supply of spiritual food.

“ And so through all the length of days
Thy goodness faileth never ;
Good Shepherd, may I sing Thy praise,
Within Thy house for ever.” *Amen.*

XVIII.

**** Peace. perfect peace.****

ISAIAH XXVI. 3.

“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee.”

THERE are many instances both recorded and unrecorded of the sermon having been assisted and improved through the stimulus supplied by the preceding hymn. But there are also instances upon record of the sermon so impressing a poetic hearer, as to lead to the production of some charming verses. Of this there is no better example than that supplied by the history of the origin of “Peace, perfect peace.”

Dr. Bickersteth had been present during a sermon preached by Canon Gibbons, on the text, “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee.”

He was deeply impressed by the discourse, and as soon as he arrived home, he produced this most beautiful of all his hymns in a few minutes. This happened in the year 1875, only some thirty years

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ago, and yet the hymn has become a great popular favourite, and has secured a place in all the new editions of our hymnals.

It must be admitted that both the words and the melody, "Pax Tecum," to which they are usually sung, are deserving of such recognition.

It would be no easy matter to appropriate, in its proper proportion, the credit due to the preacher and hymnist in the production of this beautiful hymn. As a lyric it has a beauty all its own, and from a theological point of view, there is a restfulness in its sentiments, which is well calculated to shed a calm over every troubled heart.

Dr. Bickersteth was a most experienced hymnologist. He was the editor of several collections of hymns and poems. "The Hymnal Companion to the Book of Common Prayer," was prepared under his supervision, and it is now one of the three most widely used hymnals in this country.

The late Bishop of Exeter had a charming personality, and many of his acts and deeds are deserving of perpetuation, but if his name is to live through the centuries, it will, doubtless, be owing to the hymn, the composition of which occupied him for the mere fraction of an hour. Edward Henry Bickersteth was born in 1825, at Islington. He was the son of the Rev. Edward Bickersteth, rector of Watton, in Herefordshire, who had at one time been Secretary of the Church Missionary Society. After being carefully educated, he was entered at Trinity College, Cambridge, where he showed his taste for

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poetry, obtaining the Chancellor's medal for English Verse in three successive years—1844, 1845, and 1846. He took his degree in 1847, and proved himself a ripe and good scholar, but his attainments would not rank as the highest class.

In mathematics he came out as Senior Optime, and he also got a third class in the Classical Tripos. He was ordained in 1848 to a curacy in Norfolk, and some four years after, he became rector of Hinton-Martell, in Dorsetshire, where he remained for three years, when he was presented to the Vicarage of Christ Church, Hampstead, which he held for thirty years. During his stay at Hampstead, Christ Church became a leading centre for evangelical influence and good works. Dr. Bickersteth took an active and foremost interest in the Councils of the Church Missionary Society. In 1880, he wrote a remarkable letter on behalf of the Society, which is still known as the "For My sake and the Gospel's" letter. This letter produced many noble gifts, including one of £1,000, from Dr. Bickersteth himself.

Some two years afterwards, he issued his "Half as much again" appeal, which was so liberally responded to, that it placed the Society on a more secure financial basis. But his money and his influence were not the only gifts which Dr. Bickersteth bestowed on the missionary cause. His son, Edward, became Bishop of Tokyo, where he did most useful work till his all too early death.

In 1885, Dr. Bickersteth was offered the Deanery of Gloucester, which was followed almost immediately

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by an offer of the Bishopric of Exeter, in succession to Bishop Temple. He was consecrated at St. Paul's on the same day as Dr. King, who is still the revered Bishop of Lincoln. His health began to fail in 1900, and he retired from the responsible position which he had occupied with credit to himself and benefit to the Church for fifteen years. On May 16th, 1906, he passed to his eternal rest, thus closing a career of great usefulness in the Church of God.

His grave is marked by what he considered to be an ideal Christian monument. This monument is a marble cross surmounting three steps, surrounded by a massive kerbing, all in white marble. The cross bears in Greek letters the words "In Christ." The steps on which the cross stands bear the following inscription :

" ' Peace, perfect peace.' "

To the glory of God, and in loving memory of
Edward Henry Bickersteth, D.D.

Born January 25th, 1825; at rest May 16th, 1906.

Bishop of Exeter, 1885-1900.

' In Thy likeness is fulness of joy.

I shall be satisfied when I awake in Thy likeness.' "

He has, however, left no more permanent memento behind him than the hymn for our consideration this evening ; " Peace, perfect peace."

Peace is a beautiful word. When the parting-time drew near that the Lord Jesus should leave the world and return to His Father, this was the word He used to comfort His sorrowing disciples.

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“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you : not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid ” (St. John xiv. 27).

Ah, yes, you think the word is beautiful and the thing is beautiful, but it seems unattainable here below. With fightings without and fears within it is hard for the poor sinner to find peace.

The truth of such a suggestion cannot be denied. But with our text before us we can hardly pronounce the attainment of peace, even in this dark world of sin, to be an impossibility.

The words of the prophet are clear and distinct. “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee.” These words imply not merely the possibility of attaining to peace, but to perfect peace “in this dark world of sin.”

You may have noticed that Dr. Bickersteth puts the first line of each couplet, except the last, in the form of a question. He seems to have foreseen that poor sinful, restless, alarmed, anxious creatures, would doubt the possibility of enjoying perfect peace amidst the anxieties of this earthly life. So he puts each proposition in the form of a question. Then he supplies the answer. He does not dogmatize. He merely suggests. With a sinful nature and in a sinful world, you ask: “How can this thing be?” You repeat the first line of the hymn :

“Peace, perfect peace, in this dark world of sin ? ”

You are tempted to reply, “It cannot be.” Then

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you look a little closer, you see the gracious words in which the hymnist answers his own query :

“ The Blood of Jesus whispers peace within.”

Ah! that precious Blood! Even “in this dark world of sin,” it can whisper “peace within.” The Saviour’s promise is sure. “These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace, in the world ye shall have tribulation; be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (St. John xvi. 33).

Let us now read our hymn by way of question and answer:—

“ Peace, perfect peace, in this dark world of sin?
The Blood of Jesus whispers peace within.

“ Peace, perfect peace, by thronging duties press’d?
To do the will of Jesus, this is rest.

“ Peace, perfect peace, with sorrows surging round?
On Jesus’ Bosom nought but calm is found.

“ Peace, perfect peace, with loved ones far away?
In Jesus’ keeping we are safe and they.

“ Peace, perfect peace, our future all unknown?
Jesus we know, and He is on the Throne.

“ Peace, perfect peace, death shadowing us and ours?
Jesus has vanquish’d death and all its powers.”

It is Jesus in every line. He it is Who has secured peace, perfect peace, for us by the sacrifice of Himself. When we see Jesus as the Lamb of

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God that taketh away the sin of the world, the daylight of our peace begins to dawn. When we realise our Father's love in sending His Son to die for us, the peace of God begins to creep into our hearts. Our consciousness of guilt is deeper than ever. We see that our sins have been many and great, but we realise that "the Blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin." Hence arises our peace.

Let me tell you the sum and substance of all our preaching. I will put it in one sentence. "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!" This is the foundation on which rests all true peace. Do you ask me, "How can this be?" Do you hesitate until you know all the philosophy of God's way of salvation? Why should you so act? You do not so hesitate in other matters.

You want to go to London by train. You do not hesitate to commence the journey, because you are not very clear as to the principles employed in the construction of a locomotive engine. You want to use the telegraph to communicate some information to a friend. You do not delay until you comprehend all the mysteries of the electric fluid which carries your message. Why then hesitate to accept the gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, because there are depths of love in it that you cannot fathom? That gospel is, "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world." That gospel is peace.

Peace, perfect peace. So

“Peace, perfect peace, in this dark world of sin?
The Blood of Jesus whispers peace within.”

Don't wait until you know. Accept the gospel as you accept other things. It has brought peace, perfect peace, to thousands upon thousands. Why should it fail in your case? Do not commit the sin at which the Saviour marvelled. What sin is that? It is the sin of unbelief. That, in the estimation of Jesus Christ, was the sin of sins. And yet even professing Christian people commit it. Many who would shudder at the thought of being guilty of forgery, or dishonesty, or profanity, commit the sin of sins almost with complacency. It is to be feared that the Saviour still marvels at the unbelief of many. Let us not be of the number. “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God.” This is the path that leads to peace here and peace hereafter. There is no other sure and certain road. The way may be steep and stony, but it is bridged by expiation, and made smooth by consecration. This was the path the Master trod. This is the only road that leads to that peace with God which passeth all understanding—a peace which the world can neither give nor take away.

“It is enough: earth's struggles soon shall cease,
And Jesus call us to Heav'n's perfect peace.” *Amen.*

XIX.

"At Even ere the Sun was Set."

ST. LUKE IV. 40.

"Now when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto Him ; and He laid His hands on every one of them, and healed them."

WHEN I announced the first line of the hymn for our consideration this evening, I doubt not that some of you would think I had made a mistake. And yet I have quoted the words precisely as they were written by Henry Twells. It is true that we find them altered in some hymn books, but the author never admitted that such alterations were improvements, or that there was any necessity to make them. He always maintained that the statement of St. Mark, "At even when the sun did set," when read in the light of St. Luke's account, "And when the sun was setting," clearly indicated that "the incident took place at sunset, not after it."

The person who seems to have first suggested that a change would be an improvement was Prebendary Thring. When compiling a hymn book, he asked Canon Twells' permission to insert his hymn, "At

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even ere the sun was set," pointing out, at the same time, what he deemed would be an improvement.

It appears that Canon Twells strongly maintained that such an alteration did not seem to him an improvement, although he permitted the change to be made. But, notwithstanding the author's contention that no alteration was required, the opening line, as he wrote it, seems destined to disappear in the near future.

The editors of the new edition of "Church Hymns" have adopted the change, and the line now stands,

"At even, when the sun did set."

It at once became a popular evening hymn. The author himself has stated that his permission was asked in 127 instances to allow its insertion in hymnals, and he expressed a suspicion that it had been inserted in many more without his sanction.

Henry Twells was born in 1823, at Ashted, Birmingham. He was educated at King Edward's School, when it was under the mastership of Dr. Prince Lee, who afterwards became Bishop of Manchester. It is well known that several of the pupils attending King Edward's School at this period afterwards occupied very distinguished positions. Amongst them may be mentioned Archbishop Benson, Bishop Lightfoot, and his successor to the See of Durham, Bishop Westcott, and some others.

Even during his school-days at Birmingham, young Twells commenced to write poetry, and he was also

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noted amongst his fellows for the possession of a most retentive memory. At the close of his school education, he entered St. Peter's College, Cambridge. Here he remained till he graduated in 1848, and a year later he was ordained to the curacy of Great Berkhamsted, where he stayed for two years.

From Berkhamsted he removed to Stratford-on-Avon, where he remained for three years as sub-vicar of the parish church of Holy Trinity. During his stay here he took such a deep interest in children and young people that he became known as the children's vicar. It was, perhaps, his wonderful influence with children that turned his attention to the profession of a school-master.

So, on leaving Stratford, he entered upon a scholastic career, which lasted for sixteen years, and proved that he had all the necessary qualifications for a successful headmaster.

In 1870, Mr. Twells gave up scholastic work and became vicar of Baldock. Here he remained just long enough to be instrumental in building a vicarage house, when he was presented to the rectory of Waltham, near Melton Mowbray, which became his home till 1890, when, owing to failing health, he was obliged to resign the living. In 1884, Bishop Magee made him a Canon of Peterborough, and in the same year he became a member of the Canterbury Convocation.

Canon Twells was intimately connected with two subjects discussed by Convocation in his time. One was the extension of the Diaconate, so as to include

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men, having other means of living, who would be willing to assist the clergy without stipend. The other subject was an authorised hymnal for the whole English Church. He advocated the adoption of both propositions with great earnestness and much ability, but he failed to convert Convocation to his opinions.

Upon his resignation of the rectory of Waltham he retired to Bournemouth, and soon found his health so greatly improved that he was enabled to resume active ministerial work once more. This he did in connection with St. Stephen's Church.

While working in this parish, the need of an additional church for an outlying district forced itself upon his notice. So he offered to build one at his own expense, and the handsome Church of St. Augustine, Bournemouth, consecrated in 1892, was the result. In this church and district he ministered, as vicar-designate, till his death, on January 19th, 1900.

Two days before his death he had signed a cheque for the endowment of St. Augustine's Church. I was present on the day of his burial in Bournemouth Cemetery, and saw the open grave, which kindly hands had lined with moss and flowers. Since then a handsome, but simple, granite cross has been erected over his grave, and, standing near, you can see the church he loved, and hear the sound of its bell. Such in life and in death was Henry Twells, the author of the evening hymn, "At even ere the sun was set."

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It is evident that this hymn is founded absolutely upon its text. Its entire imagery appears complete before the mind of the writer as he contemplates a scene from gospel history. We often hear it said of certain preachers that they only use their texts as mottoes, and that the connection between the sermon and the text does not readily appear. This is no doubt true in numerous instances, but no such accusation can be brought against the author of this hymn. The whole setting and phraseology arise as a vivid mind-picture from an incident which occurred many centuries ago in the city of Capernaum.

The Lord Jesus had paid a visit to this little Galilean city and had been teaching in the synagogue on the Sabbath day. His teaching had made a distinct impression upon the congregation. The deepest interest had been aroused by the matter and manner of His discourse. Then an incident occurred which turned the interest of the audience into astonishment.

There was in the synagogue "a man with an unclean spirit." This demon addressed the Saviour, declaring that he knew Him to be "the Holy One of God." Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit and cast him out in the presence of the people, who were "beyond measure astonished," and "questioned among themselves, saying, What is this? a new teaching!"

From the synagogue our Lord went to Simon's house. Here he healed Simon's wife's mother of a fever. But the fame of the earlier miracle in the

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synagogue had gone abroad. Therefore, as the day was drawing to a close, an excited crowd approached Simon's house. Never before had Capernaum witnessed such a procession. The whole population, sick and well, sound and diseased, the one assisting the other, each and all eagerly seeking the presence of the Great Healer. Nor did they go away disappointed. Who ever did depart unblessed having eagerly sought the Saviour's presence? St. Luke tells us what was the result upon this occasion. "He laid His hands on every one of them and healed them." Blessed, gracious Saviour! He did not reject a single case. Well might Henry Twells exclaim in his beautiful couplet :

" Oh ! in what divers pains they met ?
Oh ! with what joy they went away."

Then the hymnist transfers his gaze from the historic scene as it is depicted by the evangelists to the wants and woes of a modern congregation. He realises that the Great Healer is still amongst us. He remembers the gracious promise : " Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them " (St. Matthew xviii. 20). He feels that the members of a modern congregation have just as much need of healing as had the crowd which gathered so long ago in the city of Capernaum. And then he prefaces his appeal for aid by a comparison of present circumstances with those of long ago.

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“ Once more 'tis eventide, and we
Oppressed with various ills draw near ;
What if Thy form we cannot see ?
We know and feel that Thou art here.”

This preface is followed by a catalogue of our needs—our *woes* the writer calls them. It is a marvellously comprehensive statement. You may examine a thousand hymns, and not find such a complete list of our wants and woes as we find in the two middle verses of Henry Twells' hymn. Listen !

“ O Saviour Christ, our woes dispel ;
For some are sick and some are sad,
And some have never loved Thee well,
And some have lost the love they had ;
And some are pressed with worldly care ;
And some are tried with sinful doubt,
And some such grievous passions tear,
That only Thou canst cast them out.

“ And some have found the world is vain,
Yet from the world they break not free ;
And some have friends who give them pain,
Yet have not sought a friend in Thee.
And none, O Lord, have perfect rest,
For none are wholly free from sin ;
And they who fain would serve Thee best
Are conscious most of wrong within.”

This list of our needs is not merely comprehensive—it is pathetic as well, and its pathos consists in its being so true to life. Our needs are indeed many. But is there no remedy ? Oh, yes, thanks

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be to God, there is. "As for me, I am poor and needy : but the Lord careth for me" (P.B. version, Psalm xl. 20). Here we have the frailty and the greatness of man placed before us in two short sentences.

Never in the history of our race has the contrast between the insignificance and importance of man been so fully realised as in this present day. As Pascal puts it : "Man is a reed, but he is a reed that thinks." He looks a mere atom when contrasted with the material worlds, and yet he measures and weighs those worlds and calculates their movements to a second. Even such powers would suggest that man is something more than the atom he appears. But when the Almighty declares respecting him, "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but My kindness shall not depart from thee," then it is that we get a glimpse of his real value in the eyes of Omnipotence. It is, however, in the light of the Cross that God's care for man is fully revealed. "He that spared not His Own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Romans viii. 32).

This is a most logical argument, but think how immensely it increases our responsibility. A way of escape has been opened for us at an inconceivable cost. The Mediator of all others most suited to our condition has been provided. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same : that

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through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil ; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted" (Hebrews ii. 14, 15 and 18).

This is indeed the Saviour we require. Canon Twells had doubtless this passage of the Epistle to the Hebrews before his mind when writing the last verse of his evening hymn.

" O Saviour Christ, Thou too art Man ;
Thou hast been troubled, tempted, tried ;
Thy kind but searching glance can scan
The very wounds that shame would hide ;
Thy touch has still its ancient power ;
No word from Thee can fruitless fall ;
Hear, in this solemn evening hour,
And in Thy mercy heal us all."

Yes, eventide ought to have a solemnizing influence on us all. Our Master often betook Himself about sundown to some sequestered spot amongst the Syrian hills, where He might be alone with His Father. We cannot do better than follow His example. Indeed our Heavenly Father has provided the calm retreat. It only remains for us to take refuge therein. He casts the shadows of evening athwart our path as an indication that the hours of our toil are ended. Have we not noticed how still and heaven-like this earthly scene becomes as the sun disappears and the daylight dies ? We feel at such times on the very threshold of " the secret place

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of the Most High." The still small voice whispers in our ears that we are standing at the very gate of heaven. It is good to be alone with God at any time, but the evening time lends itself especially to such intercourse. Then it is that we may most suitably contemplate the evening of life's journey and see in the deepening shadows an emblem of death itself.

Through that gate we shall enter the sunless city with its cloudless skies and stormless shores, where the shades of evening shall fall no more. Well may we say and sing and pray in the closing words of this evening hymn :

"Hear, in this solemn evening hour,
And in Thy mercy heal us all." *Amen.*

XX.

“There is a Land of pure delight.”

ISAIAH XXXIII. 17.

“Thine eyes shall behold the land that is very far off.”

THIS is one of Isaac Watts' best known hymns, and I may tell you that I consider it the noblest production of his genius. Dr. Watts was a very prolific hymn-writer. It is said that for some two years during his residence at Southampton, he wrote a new hymn every week. It was only to be expected, therefore, that the majority of the hymns produced in this fashion should die in their infancy. But the law as to the survival of the fittest holds good just as surely amongst a crowd of hymns as it does amongst a crowd of living creatures.

Many of Watts' hymns have survived because they were fit to live. They have grown stronger during the years that they have struggled for existence, and their survival is now assured.

Such a hymn is, “When I survey the wondrous Cross,” which has a long period of popularity before

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it. And another whose position is at least equally secure is, "O God, our help in ages past."

Watts wrote some of his most beautiful hymns at a very early age. It is said that the refined and charming hymn which claims our special attention this evening, was produced before his twenty-first birthday :

"There is a land of pure delight,
Where saints immortal reign,
Infinite day excludes the night,
And pleasures banish pain."

But before we consider these verses in detail, I want to bring to your remembrance Isaac Watts' famous missionary hymn. It has had a history of nearly two hundred years' duration, and it still remains one of the most popular hymns at all missionary gatherings. The hymn I am alluding to is, as many of you will know :

"Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
Doth his successive journeys run."

This hymn has been sung at all sorts of missionary meetings, large and small, and one might also say from pole to pole. But never can the occasion have been of greater interest than when it was sung by a gathering of some thousand native Christians, with their King at their head, in the South Sea Islands. It was on Whit Sunday, 1862. King George, surrounded by his chiefs, and warriors, and people, sat under the spreading branches of

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the banyan trees, having conferred upon his nation the inestimable benefit of a Christian form of government. Then followed a religious service of unique interest. It commenced by the entire assembly singing Dr. Isaac Watts' hymn :

“Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
Doth his successive journeys run ;
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
Till suns shall rise and set no more.”

What a meeting that must have been ! The King and his people had been rescued from heathenism of the basest description, and then for the first time under a Christian constitution, the islands of the Southern Seas resounded to the notes of Isaac Watts' hymn. To have written the original of the hymn used on such an occasion was indeed a precious privilege, and one that the author, had he lived to hear of the event, would have esteemed as a high honour.

But Dr. Watts died 1748. He was born at Southampton, on July 17th, 1674, and was in his seventy-fifth year at his decease. Little Isaac was a very precocious child. He loved books almost from his cradle. It is recorded that when some friend gave the wee boy a little money, he called out, “A book ! A book ! buy me a book !” He was one of those children who lisped “in numbers, for the numbers came.” While yet a small boy he had gained a considerable acquaintance with Latin, Greek, and even Hebrew. One day after young

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Watts' return from school, his mother offered him a farthing if he would write a verse of poetry for her. Very soon he handed her the oft-quoted farthing couplet :

“I write not for a farthing, but to try
How I your farthing writers can outvie.”

He greatly distinguished himself at the Grammar school of his native town, and soon added proficiency in French to his other attainments. In 1690, when he was in his sixteenth year, Watts removed to the academy at Stoke Newington, with the object of preparing for the Independent ministry. Here he worked exceedingly hard—one of his methods being to make abridgments of the books of the several writers which he was advised to study.

In his work on “Improvement of the Mind,” he strongly recommends this plan to other students. After leaving the academy he spent a short time at his father's house in Southampton, returning to Stoke Newington as tutor to the son of Sir John Hartop.

In 1698, when he was twenty-four years old, he began to preach as assistant minister in a church in Mark Lane, and in 1702 he was appointed minister in charge. Soon his health began to give way, and his Church had to supply him with an assistant. When Dr. Watts was about thirty-eight years of age, he was invited to spend a week with

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Sir Thomas and Lady Abney. His visit lasted some thirty-six years. He remained in the family till his death on November 25th, 1748. He was buried in Bunhill Fields, the *Campo Santo* of Nonconformity, and soon after his death a monument was erected to his memory in Westminster Abbey.

Watts was not a great poet although he wrote and published many verses. He too much affected classical models, and this in itself was sufficient to hamper him in his attempts to produce pleasing English verse. His fame really depends upon his hymns, many of which are very fine indeed. But I can hardly agree with James Montgomery in his estimate of Watts, whose name he declares to be the greatest amongst hymn-writers. It is true he describes him as "one of the least of the poets of this country."

Whether he errs in placing his ability as a poet too low I cannot quite determine, but I am convinced that Isaac Watts is not the greatest name amongst English hymnists. Many of his hymns, however, are beautiful and noble, and deserve the great popularity that has been accorded to them.

But we must now pass on from the life history of Dr. Isaac Watts to the consideration of his fascinating hymn. Both its rhythm and its sentiments are well calculated to secure our attention.

There is something exceedingly delightful in the contemplation of the heavenly Canaan as it is depicted in the opening verses of this hymn.

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Never has a more charming picture of the heaven-world been sketched in so few words :

“ There is a land of pure delight
Where Saints immortal reign ;
Infinite day excludes the night,
And pleasures banish pain.

“ There everlasting spring abides,
And never-withering flowers ;
Death, like a narrow sea, divides
This heavenly land from ours.

“ Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood
Stand dressed in living green ;
So to the Jews old Canaan stood,
While Jordan rolled between.”

Is not that an attractive description of the heavenly home? No more darkness, no more pain, no more grief, no more weariness, no more sin, no more death! Even the Saviour of the world, in one of His most pathetic utterances, did not disdain to encourage poor sinners to come to Him, in the hope of finding rest from the weariness of their burden-bearing, “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Such was the Master’s gracious invitation, and the hymnist only follows in His footsteps.

There is some instinct in the mind of man, be he Christian or be he pagan, which prompts him to look forward to, and to long for those “sweet fields” where it is always spring, and where

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the flowers neither wither nor decay. St. Paul, writing to the Corinthian Church, declares himself fully assured of the existence of such a "land of pure delight," "For we know that if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Corinthians v. 1.) And even the pagan philosopher Cicero, looked forward to a home in the "Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood." "O glorious day," he exclaims, "when shall I depart to that Divine company and assemblage of spirits, and quit this troubled and polluted scene? For I shall go not only to those great men whom I reverence, but also to my friend Cato, than whom was never better man born." This noble Roman instinctively expected to visit the

"Land of pure delight,
Where Saints immortal reign,"

and he was fully persuaded that when he joined the *immortals* whom he had known and loved on earth, he would still know and love them.

Next to that fountain of "pure delight" which will flow into every redeemed soul at the vision of Jesus, must come the joy of meeting once more the friends we have loved on earth. I believe most distinctly that our dear departed ones "will stand at the beautiful gate, waiting and watching for us."

When the soul of that good and clever man, Dr. Marsh, was just about to leave the body he

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is reported to have recognised his late wife, and addressed her as if she were standing by his bed. And I can well believe that he really saw her there.

Many years ago I was asked to visit a dying woman in a distant part of this city. She had once been a very devoted worshipper at St. Thomas's Church, but had removed with her family to Newland. I hastened to her bedside, and soon noticed that the moment of her departure was drawing near. She recognised me and spoke a few words, and then lay with her eyes partially closed, apparently listening to what I was saying. All at once she started and, gazing towards the foot of the bed, exclaimed in distinct tones, "The little darlings, the dear little darlings, they are come!" Soon afterwards she passed away. Before leaving the house I inquired of a young girl, her daughter, whether any of her brothers or sisters had died in infancy. "Oh, no," she replied, "we have never had a death in the family before." But on the day of the funeral a married daughter told me a different tale. She remembered that her parents had lost two little ones, although her mother, she added, had seldom spoken of them. Instances of such recognitions at the moment of departure are very numerous, and can hardly, in every case, be due to a vivid imagination.

But "gloomy doubts" do and will arise. We dread to face the "swelling flood" which, "like a narrow sea," divides "the heavenly land from

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ours." And yet the apostle in his letter to the Thessalonians puts before us the assurance of a future meeting with our loved ones, as an antidote to despondency at their departure. His words are, "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him" (1 Thessalonians iv. 13, 14).

"Oh, could we make our doubts remove,
Those gloomy doubts that rise,
And see the Canaan that we love
With unobscured eyes;

"Could we but climb where Moses stood,
And view the landscape o'er;
Not Jordan's stream, nor death's cold flood
Should fright us from the shore."

The Rev. C. H. Spurgeon, in one of his sermons, declares: "I feel quite certain that many of those who die in the Lord see heaven before they get into it; hear its melodies, and almost join in its worship before they get there. It seems as if the Lord takes away the veil which hides from us the unseen; just as the spirit stands on the verge of eternity, sunlight streams into the eyes of dying saints; they have climbed the top of Nebo, and viewed the landscape o'er."

Such testimony from such a man is most comforting. It is evident then that the Christian need

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not fear to launch his boat on the narrow sea. With Jesus for his Pilot he has no need to shrink from such a voyage. The all-important question is: Have we engaged the Pilot? Have we placed ourselves under His guidance? Yes. That is the question for you and me.

“ Lord Jesu, be our Guide ;
Oh, lead us safely on,
Till night and grief and sin and death
Are past, and heaven is won.” *Amen.*

XXI.

"Now the labourer's task is o'er."

I CORINTHIANS XV. 55.

"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

THE author of this most solemn hymn was the Rev. John Ellerton. He seems to have excelled as a writer of hymns for special seasons and occasions. One of his best known hymns, if we except that for our present consideration, is an evening hymn :

"Saviour, again to Thy dear Name we raise,
With one accord our parting hymn of praise ;
We stand to bless Thee ere our worship cease ;
Then, lowly kneeling, wait Thy word of peace."

There is also a second peculiarly beautiful evening hymn from his pen, beginning :

"The day Thou gavest, Lord, is ended,
The darkness falls at Thy behest ;
To Thee our morning hymns ascended,
Thy praise shall hallow now our rest."

And there is scarcely a time, or a season, or an occasion for which he has not written some suitable

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verses. There is one for laying the foundation-stone of a church, and when the building falls into decay and requires restoration, John Ellerton has provided an appropriate hymn for the occasion.

Should the invader ever visit our shores, which God forbid, our author has left ready for use a tug-of-war anthem, each verse of which ends with the time-honoured prayer, "Give us peace in our time, O Lord!" And in the event of our crops failing, and our supplies from beyond the seas falling short, a penitential psalm has been added to our hymn books suitable for seasons of scarcity.

But the more joyous events of life were not forgotten. One of the most touching of our wedding-day hymns was written by Canon Ellerton.

It would appear that when he was rector of Barnes, he was asked by the Duke of Westminster to compose a suitable hymn for his daughter's marriage. The result of this request was a hymn that is now very well known. It was sung for the first time in 1876, at the marriage of the Duke's daughter to the Marquis of Ormonde. It begins,

"O Father, all-creating,
Whose wisdom, love, and power
First bound two lives together
In Eden's primal hour."

But Canon Ellerton was well aware that a mournful, muffled peal is heard, even oftener than joyous marriage bells, therefore he did not forget to

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supply solemn funeral dirges suitable for such occasions.

In many of our hymnals two such burial hymns from his pen, are to be found. One of them was written when the Canon was a curate at Brighton.

A Sunday school scholar had been removed by death, and the young clergyman composed a special hymn for the funeral. This hymn is now to be found in numerous hymnals, and is becoming more popular as the years roll by. It usually consists of five six-line verses beginning :

“God of the living, in Whose Eyes
Unveiled Thy whole creation lies;
All souls are Thine; we must not say
That those are dead who pass away;
From this our world of sin set free,
We know them living unto Thee.”

But by far the most popular of our funeral hymns is the pathetic lyric for our more immediate consideration this evening, “Now the labourer’s task is o’er.”

This hymn was originally written for the hymnal used in this church—“Church Hymns”—of which Canon Ellerton was one of the editors. In his “Notes on Church Hymns,” he acknowledges his indebtedness for some expressions in this hymn to a charming poem, by the Rev. Gerald Moultrie, beginning, “Brother, now thy toils are o’er.”

Canon Ellerton was himself, however, a gifted and a capable man, whose contributions to hymnology

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were extensive and valuable. He was born in London in the year 1826, and after taking his B.A. degree at Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1849, he was ordained to a curacy in Eastbourne, in 1850. In 1852, he became Lecturer at St. Peter's, Brighton. His first parish was Crewe Green, to which he was promoted by Lord Crewe, in 1860. Here he remained for some twelve years, afterwards becoming rector of Hinstock, then rector of Barnes, and finally rector of White Roding, where he remained till his death in 1893. Mr. Ellerton did not confine himself to writing hymns. He published some prose works, amongst them a very interesting volume, entitled, "The Holiest Manhood." But it is as a hymn-writer that he is most widely known, and if his memory is to survive for any very lengthened period, it will be owing to his being the author of some half-dozen charming hymns.

As already intimated, Canon Ellerton was one of the editors of "Church Hymns," and his "Notes and Illustrations" on this book constitute a very valuable contribution to our knowledge of the history of "Hymns and their Singers."

When we consider the subjects chosen by this hymnist and his treatment of them, we cannot but admire the results.

Between fifty and sixty of his hymns and translations have been published, and it can be truly said that there is not a single instance of mediocrity amongst them. They do not rise to the sublime in every case. But there is never lacking a devotional

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tone in the words and rhythm, which is conducive to the solemn worship of Almighty God.

There is no seeking after effect in John Ellerton's hymns. They are all deeply spiritual in idea and most tender in expression. They are well calculated to soothe the feelings and elevate the thoughts of those who use them on the various occasions for which they are suitable. Of course there can be no more solemn occasion than that on which we consign our dear ones to their last resting-place, "Until the day dawn and the shadows flee away." The most thoughtless amongst us feel the solemnity of the open grave. How inexpressibly distressing must be the condition of all who have lived without God in the world when the King of Terrors is discovered to be approaching.

Having ignored the Almighty during life, the idea of His presence cannot give comfort in the hour of death.

It is only the Christian that can adopt as his own the words of the Psalmist: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me; Thy rod, and Thy staff, they comfort me."

But even for the most godly there is something very solemn in the thought of death. Bunyan was well aware of this for he describes Christian and Hopeful as exhibiting some alarm on their approaching the bridgeless river. "Now I further saw, that betwixt them and the gate was a river; but there was no bridge to go over, and the river was very

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deep. At the sight, therefore, of this river, the pilgrims were much stunned ; but the men that went with them said, 'You must go through, or you cannot come at the gate.'"

Yes, I believe our Heavenly Father wishes to impress us with the solemnity of death. But death need be no King of Terrors to the Christian man or woman. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours." Such was the voice from heaven that sounded in the ears of the beloved disciple in his lonely Patmos. It proclaims peace after battle, home after voyage, rest after labour, and these same sentiments animate the opening verse of Canon Ellerton's hymn :

" Now the labourer's task is o'er ;
Now the battle-day is past ;
Now upon the farther shore
Lands the voyager at last.
Father, in Thy gracious keeping
Leave we now Thy servant sleeping."

It seems natural and fitting to weep for the departed, and yet when we think of the home to which they are gone, and the blessedness to which they have attained, surely rejoicing would be a more befitting mood than lamentation. I have never noticed any lamentation on Degree Day at the University. The occasion is indeed a most joyous one. Friends near and dear assemble to witness the attainment of the hopes and fears of many past years.

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The student is about to enter upon another and a newer life, leaving the former existence entirely behind him. But his friends do not weep because of this new departure. Very far from it! They rejoice with him, and acclaim the day of his graduation as an entrance upon a wider and a brighter life. The young man himself may have his regrets as he thinks of parting from the happy associations of his boyhood. But he sheds no tears. The new departure and his hopes of a brilliant future so gladden his heart that he forgets the strain and anxieties of former years.

So should the Christian meet the change in life which we call death. It is his graduation day. Why should he weep because the day has arrived for which he has been preparing for years? As a matter of fact he does not weep. The dying seldom shed tears. They seem to know that they are approaching the borders of that land where crying shall cease for ever.

“ There the tears of earth are dried ;
There its hidden things are clear ;
There the work of life is tried
By a juster Judge than here.
Father, in Thy gracious keeping
Leave we now Thy servant sleeping.”

Oh, if we could only see as we are seen and know as we are known, what wonderful things might appear around and about us. It is possible that we might behold sights quite as amazing as the horses and chariots of fire that filled the mountain round

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about Elisha. But like the prophet's servant, our eyes are holden that we cannot see. We are like the girl whose vision was so defective that she was unaware of the existence of the stars in the sky. The story is told of such a one upon whose eyes a surgical operation had been performed. One evening when her recovery was nearly completed she stepped out upon the lawn of her father's house. To her boundless astonishment she observed some phenomena that had never appeared to her before. In her excitement she rushed into the house exclaiming, "Oh, do come quick, quick, and see the beautiful things that have appeared in the sky." For the first time in her life she had seen the stars. The surgical operation had opened her eyes, and her vision was no longer limited as it had been previously. I feel that we are very much like that maiden in the days of her shortness of sight. What wonders might we not behold were the scales to fall from our eyes! How near to us might we find our dear ones after all!

Surely this must have been the idea in the mind of the poet when writing "The May Queen":

"If I can I'll come again, mother, from out my resting-place;
Tho' you'll not see me, mother, I shall look upon your face;
Tho' I cannot speak a word, I shall hearken what you say,
And be often, often with you, when you think I'm far away."

But to return to our more immediate subject. How encouraging and consoling are the closing verses of this hymn.

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As we lay our loved ones in the grave it is comforting to remember that "There is life in a look at the Crucified One." The thought that even now they are realising in Paradise the boundless love and compassion of the Saviour is most consoling.

"There the sinful souls that turn
To the Cross their dying eyes,
All the love of Christ shall learn
At His feet in Paradise.
Father, in Thy gracious keeping
Leave we now Thy servant sleeping."

Then the hymnist turns our thoughts to the security and peace enjoyed by our dear departed ones. Here the powers of evil have liberty to tempt and torment the Master's most faithful disciples. There they shall be beyond the reach of the evil one and all his strategy. Into that heavenly city "There shall in no wise enter anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie."

"There no more the powers of hell
Can prevail to mar their peace ;
Christ the Lord shall guard them well ;
He who died for their release.
Father, in Thy gracious keeping
Leave we now Thy servant sleeping."

The opening words of the last verse of this hymn are very familiar words to us clergy. We are seldom very long without having to repeat them over the remains of one or other of our dear people. I know

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that it is sad to part from those we love. But when they go to see Jesus, and to be like Him, there is no room for lamentation.

Ah, dear friends, it matters little where a man dies, or how he dies, so that he dies in the light of Jesu's face. Other friends may fail us, but Jesus never. Other friends may be far away, but He is with us ever. All other lamps grow dim, but the light that beams from the face of Jesus shines more and more until we see that face. "And when we see Him we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

"'Earth to earth, and dust to dust';
Calmly now the words we say;
Left behind we wait in trust
For the Resurrection day.
Father, in Thy gracious keeping
Leave we now Thy servant sleeping."

THE END.

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